

Frequently Asked Questions Volunteer Docent Training Programme 2022-2023

What is the Volunteer Docent Training Programme?

The docent training programmes are run by FOM volunteers and prepare FOM members to guide visitors in one of 10 museums and heritage institutions in Singapore, as well as 2 outdoor heritage trails. The following museums, heritage institutions and outdoor heritage trails will be running a training programme in the 2022-2023 training year (September 2022- August 2023):

Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)	Applications are closed
National Museum of Singapore (NMS)	Applications are closed
Indian Heritage Centre (IHC)	Jan 2023 start
Changi Chapel and Museum (CCM)	Feb 2023 start
URA/FOM Chinatown Heritage Trails	Jan 2023 start

The following museums, heritage institutions and outdoor heritage trails **will not** be running training in the 2022-2023 training year due to renovations and other reasons.

Singapore Tyler Print Institute (STPI)	No training this year (Accepting Expression of interest via FOM website)
MHF/FOM Kampong Gelam Heritage Trail	No training this year (Accepting Expression of interest via FOM website)
Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH)	No training this year
Malay Heritage Centre (MHC)	Closing for revamp
Gillman Barracks (GB)	No training this year
Singapore Art Museum (SAM)	Currently closed for revamp
The Peranakan Museum (TPM)	Currently closed for revamp

Dates of upcoming docent training:

Museum	Starts	End of Training	Completion of Mentor Tour *
IHC	Tues 10 Jan 2023	May 2023	Jun/Jul 2023
CCM	Wed 1 Feb 2023	Apr 2023	May/June 2023
URA/FOM Chinatown Heritage Trails	Fri 13 Jan 2023	Mar/Apr 2023	May/June 2023

* This date varies as it reflects the completion date (within 3 months from End of Training) of your mentor tour (an actual public tour within the museum/heritage institute or heritage trail).

Holiday Breaks:

All official Singapore holidays are recognised by the training teams. In addition, there are no classes during official holiday periods (do check with specific museum team for variations):

October Break	Mon 17 Oct 2022 – Fri 21 Oct 2022
Deepavali Break	Mon 24 October 2022
Christmas/Year-End Break	Mon 19 Dec 2022 – Fri 6 Jan 2023
Chinese New Year Break	Mon 23 Jan 2023 – Fri 27 Jan 2023
Good Friday	Fri 7 April 2023

On which days of the week is training held?

ACM: Compulsory training days on Tuesday (9:00-13:30) and Friday mornings (10:00-12:00). Occasional field trips on Wednesdays.

NMS: Compulsory training days on Tuesdays (9:00-13:30) and field trips on Thursday (9:00-12:00).

IHC: Compulsory training days on Tuesdays (9:00-13:30) and Thursdays (9:00-12:00). Occasional field trips on Wednesdays.

CCM : Compulsory training days on Wednesdays (9:00-13:45) and Fridays (9:30-13:00)

URA/Chinatown: Compulsory training days on Wednesdays (9:00-13:00) and Fridays (9:00-13:00)

Is the training in-person or on Zoom?

Our training programmes will be in-person this year and not conducted via Zoom. Exceptions for Zoom sessions will be to accommodate overseas speakers.

Will I be paid for guiding?

No, this is a voluntary position. FOM members may not receive remuneration for their FOM-related activities.

What should I take into consideration before applying?

Please consider the time commitment carefully as it will impact your other commitments—to your family (partner, children, perhaps parents), and any professional commitments, especially if you are in full time employment or studies. The courses are time-consuming. If you fall behind, it is very difficult to catch up. Please consider any other commitments or plans (holidays etc.) you may have that may prevent you from completing the course.

FOM tours are conducted on weekdays. We do not guide on weekends except on special occasions. Do consider if you would be able to commit to this.

Will it take up a lot of my time?

With required course lectures, reading, independent research, the preparation of gallery talks and tour papers, as well as participating in group field trips, you should be prepared to commit a fair amount of time to your training in addition to course attendance. A good comparison is attending a college-level course. Your English language skills, learning style, etc. will all be contributing factors. FOM docents take their commitment very seriously. We want to do the best job we can. This is only possible by fully participating in the training programme.

Can I train in more than one programme?

You may not train at more than one programme at the same time, even if the training days do not overlap and no matter how experienced you already are. Each training programme is different in content and intensive.

English is not my native language. Can I still be a guide?

All lectures and instruction will be in English. All tours are also conducted in English. All guides must be proficient English speakers. However, many of our guides speak English as a second language and do a fantastic job. You do not need to be a native speaker, but consider carefully if this could impact your ability to keep up with the reading and writing of your papers. In addition, think about how comfortable you are presenting in English before you apply.

I have no experience in public speaking. Can I still apply?

During the training, you will get lots of practice and advice on how to conduct an effective tour. Specific tips, coaching and regular practice will help you gain confidence and learn this style of public speaking. Go on as many tours as possible before the course begins and you will see that everyone has a different style. We will help you develop yours. Being a museum guide involves talking to people about the museum, its narratives, and its exhibits. It's not about memorizing and delivering a prepared speech, but more a conversational presentation based on a well-prepared tour paper.

What happens if I miss a session?

Any missed session is very hard to recover from, given the amount of reading, research and preparation for gallery talks and papers. If you know now that you will miss more than two training days, please consider postponing training until a year when you are able to give the commitment required.

You are allowed to miss a maximum of 2 sessions per training programme (or 1 session for the shorter training programmes). Please let the training organisers know of any travel plans as soon as you can.

How much work do I have to hand in?

All training programmes have weekly reading to do and weekly homework to submit. On top of that, you will be asked to research and write several gallery papers (tour scripts) of varying lengths, which you will then present to your peers and evaluators. These will form the basis of your tour (or final) paper. A tour paper is the spoken script of a one-hour tour that you will give to visitors in the museum. As a guide, you will constantly continue to fine-tune this tour and develop new ones as time goes by. However, this initial tour paper prepares you to be a museum docent. Experienced FOM docents will review your tour paper and work with you to ensure the information is correct, includes the necessary narratives and themes, covers the requisite galleries and has a good flow.

I'm nervous speaking in public. Can I learn to be a good guide?

Being a museum guide involves talking to people about the museum and its exhibits. As mentioned above, it's not about memorising and delivering a prepared speech, but more a conversational presentation.

During the training, you will get lots of practice and advice on how to conduct an effective tour. Specific tips, coaching and regular practice will help you gain confidence and learn this style of public speaking. Go on as many tours as possible before the course begins and you will see that everyone has a different style. We will help you develop yours.

Will there be a test?

There will be ongoing evaluations of your progress. As mentioned above, there will be written papers and spoken presentations which will be peer-evaluated throughout the programme. You will not be permitted to use any device, paper or other form of prompts during these spoken presentations. Only after successfully completing all your papers, will you be scheduled to conduct your Mentor Tour. This is an actual public tour, conducted under the observation of an experienced FOM docent who will serve as your mentor. This serves as your final review by your training team. You will only "graduate" as a docent after you clear this mentor tour.

How much are the training course fees?

The training course fees for 2022 -2023 docent training programmes are as follows:

Duration Based	Training Fees *
ACM & NMS	SGD 600
IHC	SGD 400
CCM, URA	SGD 300

*FOM is run by volunteers. Training fees are utilised for administration, speaker tokens and other training related expenses. We do not offer concessions for seniors or students.

Must I be an FOM member to train as a docent?

Yes, you must be a member of FOM in order to attend the training programme and eventually guide. If you are not currently a member, you must join FOM before you can join the course. Joint and family memberships are also available. You can sign up for membership and the docent training online via www.fom.sg

Is there a minimum age for trainees?

Yes, you need to be at least 18 years old.

Do I get a refund if I change my mind after I pay?

No. The course fee is non-refundable once paid, as a number of expenses will already have been incurred by FOM and the training team on your behalf. Email training@fom.sg for any clarification.

What is my commitment after the course?

When you are accepted into an FOM docent training programme, you will be required to sign a form that commits you to actively guide a minimum number of tours for one year following the completion of your Mentor Tour. (Please check with the specific training team for exact commitment as this may vary slightly from museum to museum.) The tours include both regular and special tours, for example students or special needs groups.

You are also expected to join the next training team to help organise and run the next round of docent training.

You also need to commit to continue upskilling and learning by attending refresher courses, lectures and on-going training activities to keep up-to-date.

I recently trained to be a docent at a museum and have not yet completed my one-year commitment to guiding there. Can I join another training programme?

Yes, but this is not encouraged as it would impact your involvement in the next training team or your current tour commitments. You will also need to follow the normal application and interview process and be accepted in the new museum in which you want to train.

How big is each class?

Each programme accepts a limited number of trainees. FOM docent training is popular. All applicants also need to go through an interview before being accepted for training.

Do I need a computer and smartphone?

You must have regular access to a computer, the Internet, a mobile phone and an email address. Almost all communication for trainees and existing docents is sent or accessed through emails. Training programmes use Google Drive for access to resources and information. You must be comfortable using a computer to access the online information, write your tour papers in MS Word or Pages (Mac) files, submit them as attachments via Email, and connect to group websites. We also have Whatsapp chat groups for quick communications during and after training.

How do I sign up?

You can sign up online via our website www.fom.sg under English Docent Training.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

E-mail: training@fom.sg for any questions regarding the docent training programmes.

Please note: we have made every effort to provide accurate information in this document. However, minor changes may be necessary due to unforeseen circumstances.