

Frequently Asked Questions Volunteer Docent Training Programme 2020-2021

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 9 museums and heritage institutions in Singapore, as well as outdoor heritage trails:

- **Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)**
- **National Museum of Singapore (NMS)**
- **Indian Heritage Centre (IHC)**
- **Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH)**
- **URA/FOM Chinatown Heritage Trails**
- **Singapore Tyler Print Institute (STPI)**
- **Malay Heritage Centre (MHC)**
- **MHF/FOM Kampong Gelam Heritage Trail**
- **Gillman Barracks (GB)**
- **Singapore Art Museum (SAM)** – currently closed for revamp
- **The Peranakan Museum** - currently closed for revamp

Dates of upcoming docent training:

Museum	Starts	End of Lectures	End of Training
ACM	Tue 8 Sept 2020	March 2021	May 2021
NMS	Tue 8 Sept 2020	March 2021	May 2021

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	Exact dates to be confirmed
Christmas/Year-End Break	Mon 14 Dec 2020 – Mon 4 Jan 2021
Chinese New Year Break	Exact dates to be confirmed
Easter Break	Exact dates to be confirmed

Will I be paid for guiding?

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

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.

Will it take up a lot of my time?

Please consider the time commitment carefully as it will impact your other commitments such as travel or to your family, or any professional commitments. The courses are intense. If you fall behind, it may be very difficult to catch up.

With required course lectures, required and optional 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. 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.

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 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 memorising 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 up to 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.

Will there be a test?

There will be on-going evaluation of your progress. As mentioned above, there will be written papers and spoken presentations which will be peer-evaluated throughout the programme. After successfully completing your tour paper, you will be scheduled to conduct your Mentor Tour. This is an actual public

tour within the museum, 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 2020 -2021 docent training programmes are as follows:

	Training Fees *
ACM & NMS	SGD 550

*FOM is run by volunteers. Training fees are utilised for administration, speaker tokens and other training-related expenses.

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 sign up for the course, pay the fee, attend a few sessions, then decide it’s not for me?

No. Once you have paid the fee and started training, there are no refunds because a number of expenses will already have been incurred by FOM and the training team on your behalf.

What is my commitment after the course?

After the course, you need to fulfil a commitment to guide a minimum number of tours each year. You also need to commit to continue upgrading and learning by attending refresher courses, lectures and on-going training activities to keep up-to-date.

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 of 12 tours for one year following the completion of your training. (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.

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 do consider if this would impact your involvement in the next training programme 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. Virtually all communication for trainees and existing docents is sent or accessed through emails. You must be comfortable using a computer to access online information, write your tour papers, submit them electronically 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.