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Guide to Starting A Private Educational Institution Business in Singapore

As a country whose natural resource is only its people, Singapore has a world-class and widely appreciated education system. The public schools are increasingly becoming popular among immigrants, the Ministry of Education conducts an annual admissions exercise during September/October for new international students who wish to join the public schools. International students need to apply for a Student's Pass in order for them to study in Singapore.

Besides public schools, there are lots of private or foreign-system schools set up their campus in Singapore, they offer a curriculum similar to the kid's home country, which is also welcomed by immigrants. For example, Singapore's top local schools ACS International, Hwa Chong International and SJI International, established their own international schools by offering secondary and post-secondary education.

1. Private School in Singapore

Singapore has established Private Education Act which required registration of a private school, courses offered and teacher to be made from MOE (Ministry of Education) if the school offers education for 10 or more persons.

This includes:

- (1) Tuition centres that teach subjects taught in mainstream schools.
- (2) Enrichment centres.
- (3) Language, music, dance and art schools that prepare students to attain an official certificate for their respective craft.

However, Private schools should not operate as alternatives to mainstream primary or secondary schools, or universities.

Registration with the CPE (Committee of Private Education) for Private Education Institute (PEI) is required if the private school offer below courses:

- (1) Offers diploma or degree courses, or some form of post-secondary certification.
- (2) Offers full-time preparatory courses for entrance or placement tests to MOE mainstream schools, or for external examinations.

- (3) Offers full-time primary or secondary education that follows a foreign or international curriculum.
- (4) Is a privately-funded special education school.

2. Categories of Licence

There are two type of licence available for starting up a private education institution in Singapore. *Certificate of Registration of School* which is register under MOE, another is *Registration of Private Education Institutions* which is register with CPE under Enhanced Registration Framework (ERF).

(1) Certificate of Registration of School (MOE)

This license is for registering privately-run schools operating academic classes leading to General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations and courses in commercial/business studies, computer education, languages, fine arts, tuition schools, enrichment centres and foreign system/international schools (including foreign system kindergartens). For school required to register with CPE are not required to register this license.

All the registration can be made through online by login to GoBusiness Licensing using CorpPass. It is advisable to submit a maximum of 10 courses and 10 teachers for new application. Additional courses and teachers can apply after the school is registered.

There is no need for renewal the registration but new branch or reopening new private school has to re-register with MOE. Private schools would also need to update information on teachers, courses, school name, school address when necessary.

The below are relevant item that are required to register with MOE;

(a) School Name

Where a sole proprietorship, partnership or company is registered with the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority (“ACRA”) for the purposes of managing a private school, both the name of the private school and the name of the sole proprietorship, partnership or company have to be exactly the same.

(b) Courses Offered and Teachers Permitted to Teach

New courses or teachers must register through GoBusiness Licensing. Schools have to obtain conduct of course letter in order to teach new courses, and teachers have to obtain permission letter to allow them to teach in the school.

(c) Management Committee Members

Committee of Management is to ensure the provision of the Education Act and the terms of the school constitution are complied with. One must submit an amendment to existing school registration licence to add or re-register members to school's Committee of Management.

(d) Premises

Only premises approved for educational activities by Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) are permitted. Things to look out for include prospects of the premises being granted the Written Permission for 'Change of Use' by the planning authorities (URA); that any alteration/renovation works planned are likely to be approved/cleared by the relevant authorities (Housing & Development Board (HDB) or Fire Safety and Shelter Department (FSSD) or Building and Construction Authority (BCA)). Private schools ought to have premises of an acceptable and reasonable size, and in addition to having classroom(s), should have space for an office/administration area/reception-cum-waiting area for students/clients, etc.

(e) Document Required

- (i) Floor plan approved by FSSD
- (ii) Fire Safety Certificate
- (iii) Grant of Written Permission from the URA or Approval on Use of Premises from the HDB
- (iv) Latest BIZFILE printout from the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority (ACRA)
- (v) Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association of Private Limited Company (for companies only)

- (vi) Forms required by MOE, comprising:
 - Committee of Management forms.
 - Appointment Note or Directors' Resolution to appoint the members of the Committee of Management.
 - Summary of Course Particulars.
 - Teacher registration forms.
 - School constitution
- (vii) Course write-up if it is not a tuition course or following MOE syllabus
- (viii) Copies of NRIC or passport (members of the Committee of Management and teachers)
- (ix) Education qualifications of teachers (to be translated into English by a notary public or a registered translator if they are in a language other than English)

(2) Registration of Private Education Institutions (CPE)

Registration of a PEI is subjected to renewal. Under the ERF, other than maintaining the registration requirements, all PEIs are required to meet the minimum credit rating requirements for renewal of registration. Every renewal period of registration will be determined by the CPE based on a basket of criteria.

(a) Corporate Status

A PEI (Private Education Institute) must either be a company registered with the ARCA, or a society registered with the Registry of Societies.

(b) Premises

The premises of a PEI must be deemed suitable for the delivery of private education by the relevant authorities, including CPE. A PEI must seek CPE's permission before operating in and making changes to its premises.

(c) Managers

PEI managers must meet the fit and proper criteria. PEI managers are the directors of the company, or the members of a society's management committee.

The duties of the managers include ensuring that course administration records are properly kept for at least five years; informing all enrolled students in the event of an impending closure and making the arrangements for students to complete the same course or a similar course in another registered PEI, at least 30 days before the actual closure; and providing an annual returns report to CPE.

(d) Academic Board

PEIs are required to establish an Academic Board to develop the policies and procedures governing academic quality and rigour, and ensuring their implementation, adherence and review. The Academic Board of a PEI must include at least three members who meet the conditions detailed in the PE Act.

(e) Examination Board

PEIs are required to establish an Examination Board to develop and implement the processes governing the conduct of examinations or assessments of its self-developed courses. Externally-developed courses should be examined or assessed according to the procedures specified by the external course developer or proprietor. The Examination Board of a PEI must include at least three members who meet the conditions detailed in the PE Act.

(f) Courses

To be registered as a PEI, it must have at least one course which is permitted by the CPE. PEIs are only allowed to develop, deliver, and award a certificate in its own name for a certificate or diploma (including advanced and postgraduate) level course. No PEI is allowed to confer associate degrees, and any undergraduate or graduate degrees in its own name. A PEI may, however, offer external degree programmes (EDPs) through its collaboration or contract with foreign education institutions, subject to these institutions meeting the EDP criteria set by the CPE. The foreign education institutions will have to commit that the EDPs offered at the PEIs are equivalent to those in their home campuses.

(g) Teachers

Teachers deployed must be fit and proper, and possess minimum qualifications and experience to teach at the level of the course deployed to. PEIs must ensure that the qualifications of the teachers are conferred by education institutions which are recognised by the relevant authority in the country or territory in which they are established, and that the qualifications have not been conferred as honorary degrees.

(h) Document Required

- (i) ACRA Printout or Society Registration Certificate
- (ii) Agreement on Sharing of Premises (if applicable)
- (iii) Approval of Use for the premises to be used as a commercial school granted by URA or HDB
- (iv) Course Developer's Permissions (if applicable)
- (v) Course Write Up (Certificates and Diploma, External Degree Programmes) (if applicable)
- (vi) Fire Safety Certificate issued by FSSD
- (vii) Floor plan of the premises
- (viii) Management Committee List (For societies only)
- (ix) Manager Declaration Form
- (x) Sample Student Contract
- (xi) Sample Certificates
- (xii) Proof of subscription to industry-wide course fee protection (IWC) or fee protection scheme (FPS) or escrow (if applicable)
- (xiii) Financial Documents / Credit Rating

3. Accreditations

Registration with MOE does not mean endorse or provide accreditation of the quality of the school, courses offered, and teachers permitted to teach. It only gives private schools the right to operate when they have met the basic requirements. Therefore, it is advisable to get accreditation for getting more credibility and confidence from the potential student base.

(1) EduTrust Certification Scheme

This is a quality assurance scheme administered by CPE for Private Education Institution in Singapore. It aims to distinguish private schools that are able to consistently maintain a high standard of quality in the overall provision of education services and make continual improvements that lead to positive student outcomes. This certification is needed to enable enrolment of any international students. Private education institutes and schools could get financial support for EduTrust certification under EduTrust Support Scheme (ESS). The ESS allows a grant of a maximum of S\$26,500 to all eligible education institutes who want to upgrade their capabilities.

(2) Singapore Quality Class (SQC) Certification

This certification enhances the positive perception about your institute and also helps in expediting the managing of student's visa applications that are submitted by SQC-certified educational institutes.

Kaizen Singapore office is able to provide clients with the advisories for setting up a private educational institution as well as applying for the related licenses, please consult our professional consultant.

If you wish to obtain more information or assistance, please visit our official website at www.kaizencpa.com or contact us through the following means:

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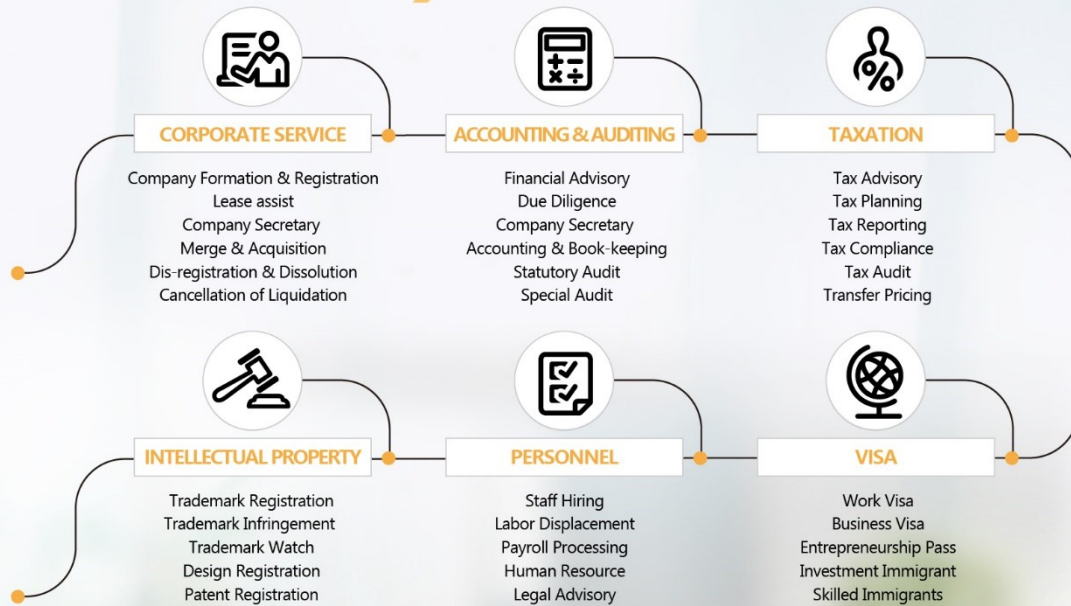
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