

# Transforming trade education: A case exemplar of industry engagement

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# Abstract

There is an urgent need among employers across global value chains to attract, retain and develop the next generation of leaders for their business. To that end, the Hinrich Foundation brought together the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University) and dozens of high profile businesses engaged in global trade in an ambitious collaborative program which has led to a significant shift in how industry and academia work together to enhance human capacity in the export trade sector.

The outcome of this aspirational endeavor has been the development of a multi-level, multi-partner Asia-based Master of Global Trade program, which was launched in 2019. Its first intake, which graduates in May 2021, comprises 25 students with an average of 12 years' trade work experience who have been nominated to study by their employers, the companies who helped to develop the program. Every course is taught by Practitioner Professors with extensive global trade expertise in addition to teaching experience, so learning is immediately applicable to the work environment, and the program is structured so students can work full-time while studying.

From this experience, there are considerable insights to be gained by trade employers in how to approach industry engagement with universities to develop next-generation talent specific to their sector's needs. The partners will continue to work to innovate the program and expand its reach to more employers, more candidates, in more geographies, using multiple modes of delivery.

 **RMIT** Master of Global Trade  
UNIVERSITY in partnership with the **hinrich** foundation

**Progressive learning designed for full-time work**  
3 stages • 12 courses • 15 months

Graduate Certificate of Global Trade	Graduate Diploma of Global Trade	Master of Global Trade
Global Trade Global Market Entry Strategies & Operations Business Data Analytics Sales & Cross-cultural Negotiations	International Logistics Managing Technology & Innovation Strategy Leadership & Ethics Business & Economic Analysis	Managing Across Cultures Business & Operations Management International Strategy Global Business Consulting

Developed by employers, for employers • Practitioner Professors & speakers from global MNCs  
Cross-functional learning across global value chains • Lifelong network of global trade leaders

# Executive summary

There is a long history of stakeholder engagement in higher education and the benefits that can ensue for industry partners, such as:

- Development of program content that meets the skill needs of employers
- Flexibility in delivery to ensure limited disruption to ongoing business operations
- Cost effective professional development and talent retention
- Immediate, specific, targeted contributions to the employer's business arising from bespoke and practical course content.

This paper presents the case of a new graduate program that has led to a shift in how industry and academia work together to enhance human capacity in the export trade sector in Asia.

The collaboration between the Asia-based Hinrich Foundation, Australia's RMIT University and a significant number of industry partners has led to the development of an educational program developed by employers, for employers, known as the **RMIT University Master of Global Trade in partnership with the Hinrich Foundation**, and delivered through RMIT's Ho Chi Minh City campus.

This case provides an exemplar of how stakeholders can effectively work together for employer-led solutions for talent leadership development in trade. The success of the Master of Global Trade is the result of the unrelenting and dedicated focus on this initiative by the Hinrich Foundation, the ongoing participation of companies working across global value chains and the innovation of RMIT University which has resulted in a winning combination of program features designed to have a positive impact on global trade education in Asia and beyond.

The key program features are:

- The curriculum was developed with full employer participation and guidance to address the skill needs of employers active in global trade
- The course allows for employees to remain active in full-time work while studying. This is achieved through a customized calendar as well as flexible modes of delivery through both blended and face-to-face engagement
- In addition to acquiring trade-related knowledge, students also enhance their soft skills and leadership expertise, participate in cross-functional learning and have the opportunity to apply their learning through authentic assessment tasks which vary in accordance with the problems current being experienced by employers

- There are nested qualifications within the course structure, offering a Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and Master's degree, thereby enabling flexibility in qualifications attainment and program duration
- Practitioner Professors ensure relevance and industry guest speakers enhance curriculum currency
- Due to a competitively priced program and the Hinrich Foundation Scholarships, which pay 100% of the tuition through the Graduate Diploma of Global Trade, a low risk and cost-effective development opportunity is available for employers and their staff
- Employers and scholars come from a range of countries, industries and roles, bringing diversity of knowledge sharing and networking across global value chains
- Scholars and employers participate in governance of the program.

This case study is written to encourage employers in the global trade sector to take a partnership approach to talent development by proactively strengthening their engagement with universities. The partners in this program are continuing to innovate to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of the program to ensure it offers a practical solution to leadership talent development.

Employers are invited to participate in this program by nominating staff to the program's two intakes per year, providing senior executives as guest speakers, and by participating in the ongoing curriculum review and development.

# Introduction

Companies operating across global trade value chains face an urgent need to develop the next generation of leaders for their business. Competition for skilled talent is intense, and staff expectations are growing for skills development, career progression and to make a larger contribution to the business.

The challenge that firms must overcome is how to attract, retain and develop the leadership talent needed to drive company growth in a sustainable manner. They express that there is a gap in the market between the career readiness of graduates even at the postgraduate level and their business needs; most notably, that the majority of programs offered are overly theoretical and course timetables do not allow for full-time work while studying.

To that end, the Hinrich Foundation brought together the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University) and a number of high-profile businesses engaged in global trade in an ambitious collaborative program which has led to a significant shift in how industry and academia work together to enhance human capacity in the export trade sector.

**Industry recognizes the benefits to be gained from engagement with universities.**

Taking an industry perspective, there are a number of specific areas where universities can be of value. Companies are increasingly partnering with higher education institutions because of the recognized need to recruit quality employees, ensure student adaptability from the tertiary setting to the business environment, encourage the currency of educational experiences to ensure a realistic preparation of students for future roles, develop existing staff for business growth, as well as access research to solve current industry problems.

This collaboration also coincides with pressures being experienced on the outcomes expected from tertiary institutions. In many countries, universities are increasingly required to be more sustainable and to look at alternative financial models as a result of decreased government support and reduction in income from international students resulting from Covid-19. The pandemic has also accelerated the online delivery of coursework, learning and networking amongst students worldwide.

**Universities are keen to enhance their efficacy and contribution to industry and society.**

There are growing societal expectations about the contribution that higher education institutions should provide. Institutions are being requested to deliver clear evidence, for government funding allocations, accreditation purposes and to other interested parties, of the efficacy of their activities. This evidence usually comes in the form of: graduate employability rates; assessments of the societal impact of research undertaken; the timely contribution of graduates to economic outcomes for their employers; and their adaptability to the industries, professions and communities they serve. As a consequence of these influences, greater attention is also being given by higher education institutions to the private sector. Partnerships between industry and higher education institutions are increasingly being formalized through MoU's, legal agreements and co-location arrangements.

Partnerships are becoming common, but truly successful collaborations require effort and innovation to overcome inherent challenges.

“We at Avery Dennison see significant value in proactively cultivating our talent especially in our developing markets. The MGT provides an excellent opportunity to equip our leaders with specifics on the technical aspects of trade as well as the essential communication skills needed to excel in a global business.”

Tuan Nguyen  
Head of Human Resources ASEAN  
Avery Dennison

For example, companies in Silicon Valley have long seen the value of a close proximity to Stanford and the University of California, Berkeley, and consider these institutions as critical players in their innovation ecosystem.

There are considerable benefits in general to be obtained from industry engagement with universities in the form of access to knowledge, knowledge sharing, staff recruitment, staff development, staff retention, profile building and problem solving. However, these partnerships are not without their challenges when it comes to establishing and maintaining fully integrated relationships. Challenges commonly observed include:

- To better prepare students for the rapidly changing work environment, it is imperative to align curriculum to meet the needs of employers; but universities and their staff are reluctant to relinquish control over the design, course development and program review processes
- Industry is looking for new learning methodologies and delivery models that are suitable for an adult working employee. Full-time degree study is often not appropriate for companies that are looking for business-aligned, short burst, cost effective, accessible (both digital and interactive) learning opportunities for their staff with value-added opportunities for the employer in the form of solving current business problems
- While employers express a desire to collaborate, they are often perplexed as to how they should approach higher education institutions and with whom within the chain of command they should directly coordinate, and how do deal with distributed decision-making arrangements
- Collaborations can be very transactional e.g. the industry partner agrees to take x number of interns, employ y number of graduates, or fund z number of awards, with little depth to the relationship
- In universities, program development and approval procedure timelines can be tortuously long and the bureaucratic structures of universities potentially frustrating. Similarly, as education and business values are different, motivations may not always align and communication can be difficult
- Industry partners may not be fully utilized. For example, universities frequently appoint industry partners to their business advisory committees, but these committees often only meet a few times in a year and with relatively little genuine exposure for industry participants to curriculum development or academic appointments
- More commonly, industry partnerships and associated projects are with individual companies, not with multiple players in a sector. Consequently, the needs of the sector as a whole are not adequately canvassed and identified. Nor are the range of skillsets required across a sector’s value chain adequately addressed

- Collaborations are commonly localized to a specific city or geographic area and do not necessarily take advantage of international opportunities, a critical aspect of global trade.

These issues have been uniquely addressed in a distinctive graduate program development which provides a thought-provoking exemplar by which industry can proactively strengthen engagement with higher education. In this case, the outcomes achieved for industry, were: an innovative and industry aligned curriculum that allows for full-time work; a sector-wide approach with courses taught by Practitioner Professors, ensuring practical applicable learning; a strong international focus, and; an alternative funding approach to talent acquisition, development and retention opportunities.

# RMIT University Master of Global Trade: Developed by employers, for employers

The Master of Global Trade is the result of intensive collaboration between a philanthropic foundation mandated to enhance capacity in the export trade sector, highly engaged employers and an innovative university.

Together they aim to develop global trade leaders who will work to improve business practices and standards in trade.

To cultivate the next generation of global trade leaders, in 2018 the Hinrich Foundation, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University) and a number of high profile businesses engaged across global value chains, embarked on an ambitious collaborative program which has led to a significant shift in how industry and academia work together to enhance human capacity in the export trade sector. The outcome of this aspiring program has been the development of a multi-level, multi-partner Asia-based Master of Global Trade program, which was launched in 2019 and enrolled its first intake in March 2020. From this experience there are considerable insights to be gained.

**The RMIT University Master of Global Trade in partnership with the Hinrich Foundation** offers a solution to bridge the widening skills gap in developing leadership talent with 21st-century management skills in the global trade sector. Trade in this context is defined broadly as cross-border commercial activity in general.

The broad objective of the Master of Global Trade is to develop global trade leaders who will work to improve business practices and standards in trade. Core to the Master of Global Trade program is highly integrated and continuous industry engagement. Each member of the partnership has actively collaborated in the conceptualization, design, curriculum development, funding, marketing, recruitment, delivery and scholar support of the program.

## The key players and historical development of the collaboration

This truly unique program draws heavily upon a partnership forged by: employers active in global trade; an academic institution, RMIT University; and the lynchpin and primary funding partner, the Hinrich Foundation. Before examining the key features of the program, it is appropriate to reflect on how this pioneering program came into being and the key players involved.



Fortune 500, multi-national companies (MNCs) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) expressed their need for a practical graduate program to develop leadership talent for their high-potential staff.

The Hinrich Foundation works to advance mutually beneficial and sustainable global trade through education and research programs.

### The Hinrich Foundation

The Hinrich Foundation is an Asia-based philanthropic organization established by Mr Merle A. Hinrich in 2012. Based on the premise that mutually beneficial and sustainable global trade strengthens relationships between nations and improves lives, the Hinrich Foundation has dedicated itself to original research and educational programs to improve international trade practices.

The Foundation's goal of advancing mutually beneficial and sustainable global trade is achieved through:

- **Supporting global trade eco-systems:** Nurturing trade networks drawn from businesses, governments, industry, academia, alumni and media to encourage fresh thinking, deeper analysis, strategic insights, policy input and data on the contemporary issues impacting global trade outcomes
- **Providing trade-related skills development programs:** Educational resources, seminars and courses for government, trade executives and media – in order for participants to gain deep, applicable knowledge about global trade
- **Funding Scholarships:** Keenly investing in people through a range of university scholarships offered to students from countries worldwide. These scholarships enable recipients to study master's degrees in programs such as global trade, international business, international affairs, foreign service and business journalism
- **Promoting an active research agenda:** Taking an objective, fact-based approach to initiate, fund and publish research that offers a better understanding of current global trade topics to help stakeholders make better informed decisions.

In recent years, Mr Hinrich challenged his team to consider how the Foundation could be a catalyst for talent development in global trade by re-conceptualizing international trade education using an applied educational approach with a globally recognized qualification. A first meeting in Ho Chi Minh City in July 2018 between Mr Hinrich and Professor Gael McDonald, who was the President of RMIT University Vietnam, sparked a mutual understanding of what could be a unique approach to employer-university partnerships in the provision of postgraduate education.

Through a series of subsequent discussions, RMIT and the Hinrich Foundation conceptualized a postgraduate program in global trade with an emphasis on "by employers, for employers." With the guiding vision and continuous dedication and financial support of the Hinrich Foundation, it was possible to develop a new model for employer-university collaboration. The focus and contribution of the Hinrich Foundation team, and the close working relationships they developed with the University, sector stakeholders and students, ensured that this initiative came to maturity.

This required ongoing and hands-on commitment by the Foundation team, by liaising extensively with senior personnel at the University, conducting industry workshops, creating a full-on sales team and processes to draw employers into the program, conducting student interviews and generally moving the initiative forward during development. Post-launch, the Foundation continues to be instrumental in promoting the program, facilitating the governance structure, sourcing industry speakers from its network, undertaking regular quality reviews and fine-tuning the program, advising during the redirection requirements for Covid-19, and ongoing student and industry partner recruitment.

### RMIT University

RMIT University has taken a regional leadership role in making students “ready for life and work.”

Founded in 1887 in Melbourne, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University) is a global university with its main campus in Australia and presence in Europe and Asia. It is one of the largest tertiary education providers in Australia, with a student body of more than 80,000 students and over 400,000 alumni. In 1998, RMIT established Vietnam’s first foreign-owned university. Today, it has campuses in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. RMIT Vietnam hosts over 7,000 students and is considered the leading international English-speaking educational institution in Vietnam.

RMIT University sees education attainment as a stepping-stone for both personal and societal development. Through transformative student experiences, RMIT is preparing students to ensure that they are “ready for life and work.” This entails post technical as well as soft skills development and awareness of the expertise necessary for operating in a more digital future environment. RMIT embraces the notion that education does not operate in a vacuum, but it is highly dependent upon the interaction between the professions and employers driving the industries that it serves.

RMIT recognized the need for a global trade degree program at a time when countries and companies face new technological, economic, political and social challenges.

RMIT is a university that prides itself in delivering relevant education, with courses constantly updated to meet the changing needs of business and the broader community. There is an undeniable focus on job outcomes with the Vice Chancellor, Martin Bean, articulating the mantra, “It’s all about the jobs!” Having played a significant role in the history of Australian education, and with an expanding international profile, RMIT recognized that a global trade degree program comes at an opportune time in the history of international trade as countries and companies face new technological, economic, political and social challenges.

The University recognized the potential for new program provision and corporate partnering opportunities. It was also a chance to build on the success of its Vietnam entity, RMIT Vietnam, situated as it is in a growing hub for trade and investment in emerging Asia. Vietnam is expected to become the world’s 20th largest economy by 2050. It is centrally located in Southeast Asia with close proximity to economic powerhouses in the region such as China, Singapore and Hong Kong SAR.

Having explored a number of suitable approaches, and reflecting on the intended philosophy of the program, educational contribution to the sector, desired pedagogical approach and essential market and financial viability, Professor

McDonald presented a preliminary proposal to the Hinrich Foundation’s governing council in November 2018, which approved moving to the next stage of development. Hinrich Foundation’s Chairman and CEO met with RMIT’s central leadership in Melbourne, including Vice Chancellor Martin Bean and Julie Cogin, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, College of Business, RMIT University, to ensure alignment with the vision of the Master of Global Trade.

In keeping with the integrated approach to taken in the development of the RMIT University Master of Global Trade in partnership with the Hinrich Foundation, a number of teams internal to RMIT Vietnam have been instrumental in its development, notably: Careers and Industry Relations, Academic Registrar, Learning and Teaching Unit, and Marketing and Academic support. Today, RMIT and Hinrich Foundation staff continue a collaborative process to further develop the program through ongoing engagement with global companies across Asia.

### Industry partners

Using the RMIT Vietnam campus located in a growing Asian trade hub at a critical time in history presented the benefit of a pre-existing network of top global corporations in need of leadership talent to ensure the sustainability of their businesses in the rapidly growing Asian economy. The Hinrich Foundation, also opened its network of relationships. To guarantee the program’s future success, participation from industry was actively sought from program ideation through to delivery. In the context of this project, an industry partner could be a company, organization or other entity operating across the trade value chain.

There is clear demand from employers in the Asian region for a program to develop leadership talent in trade. It is also clear that success requires their involvement from program ideation to development and delivery.

“Samsung has a strong focus on developing a sustainable talent development and retention strategy for our local leadership. The MGT is an excellent tool to help us achieve this goal.”

Chi Tran  
Head of Human Resources  
Vietnam

Samsung Electronics

To achieve the right focus on practical outcomes, the program uses the term “Employer Partners”, to reinforce that they are the primary customers of the program. Employer Partners are actively engaged in identifying and supporting staff and prospective staff to undertake the program for the purpose of gaining or advancing their employment in, and contribution to, trade.

Input from Employer Partners is deemed imperative to ensure that the program is current and forward-thinking in both content and delivery. Involvement of employers is also imperative for the funding model and the value-added dimensions of the program. Consultation workshops were undertaken with industry partners to gain their detailed feedback on the program intent, structure, alignment with current and future industry needs, delivery approach, graduate outcomes and future industry support.



The first of many workshops convened to best understand first-hand the interest among employers for a specific graduate program in global trade.



To ensure the Master of Global Trade meets the pressing talent development needs of trade employers, RMIT and the Hinrich Foundation convened a series of workshops with senior representatives from companies across global trade value chains.

“It’s been an honor and a pleasure – and also a responsibility we have taken very seriously – to be involved in the employer workshops and course review. It is refreshing that the Hinrich Foundation and RMIT are coordinating so closely with the industry for input into course development and content. Therefore, that gives extra assurance that our staff will receive a highly relevant learning experience that can be applied very quickly into day-to-day operations.”

Lynne M. Sprugel  
Former VP & MD  
International Sourcing Operations  
Academy International

Founder & CEO  
abuzzglobal

To solicit these contributions, the Hinrich Foundation and RMIT convened industry roundtables with employers in Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Manila and Singapore. The workshop facilitators were carefully chosen for their credibility not only in the academic domain but also for their level of understanding of the commercial context in which the participants were operating. Encouraged by the industry response and independent market research testing, RMIT and the Hinrich Foundation signed an MOU in March 2019. Following completion of the University course design and approval, a further series of industry roundtables was held.

In total, RMIT and the Hinrich Foundation convened six industry consultation events in four cities in Southeast Asia with 95 executives from 85 companies active in global trade. In Ho Chi Minh City, RMIT’s industry engagement team drew on its network and the University’s brand and reputation to convene the employer kick-off meeting. In Hong Kong, Alex Ward, Hinrich Foundation’s dedicated Employer Partner Manager, reached out to the Foundation’s long-term employer partners for a round table together with executives from RMIT Vietnam School of Business. In Manila and Singapore, Alex Boome, Program Director of the Hinrich Foundation, convened leaders in global trade who had participated in past Foundation education initiatives.

### **Master of Global Trade launch**

On 12 December 2019, RMIT University and the Hinrich Foundation launched the program in Ho Chi Minh City with 75 industry stakeholders and numerous prospective students in attendance. To give a glimpse of the level of expertise the program would represent, Hinrich Foundation Research Fellow, Stephen Olson, gave a keynote address on the state of global trade today. Warwick Cliene, CEO and Chairman of KPMG Vietnam and Cambodia, discussed the talent imperative facing both local and international employers in trade. Master of Global Trade Senior Program Manager, Dr Steven Clarke – whose trade career spans 40 years in sourcing, merchandising and overseas manufacturing in the garment, accessory and footwear business – shared program details and drove home the point that the Master of Global Trade is designed by employers, for employers.

The Master of Global Trade is designed to allow for full-time work while studying.

### Key features of the program

The outcome of this significant industry engagement was the development of the 12-course, 15-month RMIT University Master of Global Trade, taught by Practitioner Professors and with a delivery structure that allows for full-time work while studying.


**RMIT** Master of Global Trade  
UNIVERSITY in partnership with the **hinrich** foundation

**Progressive learning designed for full-time work**  
3 stages • 12 courses • 15 months

Graduate Certificate of Global Trade	Graduate Diploma of Global Trade	Master of Global Trade
Global Trade Global Market Entry Strategies & Operations Business Data Analytics Sales & Cross-cultural Negotiations	International Logistics Managing Technology & Innovation Strategy Leadership & Ethics Business & Economic Analysis	Managing Across Cultures Business & Operations Management International Strategy Global Business Consulting
Developed by employers, for employers • Practitioner Professors & speakers from global MNCs Cross-functional learning across global value chains • Lifelong network of global trade leaders		

### Program leadership

RMIT's commitment to the Master of Global Trade and the practical approach for trade professionals was underscored by their appointment of Master of Global Trade Senior Program Manager, Dr Steven Clarke. His lifelong trade expertise helped build a strong understanding of the challenges and needs of the Master of Global Trade employer partners and provide real-world teachings to the cohort of senior students.

Innovative features of the program include:

#### Multi-level qualification

To provide greater flexibility, rather than just one master's program, the qualification progresses through two nested qualifications that provide recognition for participants who may be unable to complete the full master's qualification. The first nested qualification is a foundational Graduate Certificate of Global Trade comprising four courses. Students can therefore exit after the four courses with a Graduate Certificate or continue studies and earn a Graduate Diploma of Global Trade comprising a further four courses. Completing the final four courses results in the student earning a Master of Global Trade.

The program was approved and is awarded by RMIT University, and therefore designated as an Australian qualification and subject to Australian regulatory (TESQA) requirements. Administration and delivery is in Ho Chi Minh City through RMIT Vietnam with additional regulatory oversight by Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). Importantly, all qualifications are conferred by

There are two nested qualifications: a Graduate Certificate of Global Trade and a Graduate Diploma of Global Trade.

RMIT Australia, enabling students to earn an Australian certificate, diploma and master's degree, without the need to be in Melbourne.

Industry partners were invited to influence the course design to ensure readily applicable skills.

### Collaborative curriculum design

Considerable work was undertaken with the University and the Foundation to solicit and integrate guidance from industry in determining the specific courses, course content, learning outcomes and sequence of courses. This was done to ensure, as they requested, that the courses and practical content meet their skill needs and provided a seamless building of knowledge. For instance, industry employers were not enamored with the originally proposed advanced digital marketing course, and instead were strong advocates for practical sales and negotiation training. Two courses identified by industry partners as critical for next-generation leaders in their companies were ethics and leadership, and business data analytics. They also emphasized that courses must be very applied in nature, with participants developing readily applicable skills.

Another key dimension was that in addition to foundational knowledge and application of skills the program should aim to address challenges specifically in areas where employers are operating. One means by which this is achieved is in the capstone Global Consulting course which incorporates a research-driven consulting project that reflects real world industry problems solicited from the employers whose staff are students in the program.

## EMPLOYER PARTNER HIGHLIGHT



<b>Founded</b>	1899
<b>Revenue (2019)</b>	\$13.8 billion
<b>Brands (major)</b>	The North Face Vans Timberland JanSport Eastpak Smartwool Dickies

VF is a Fortune 500 company and one of the world's largest apparel, footwear and accessories companies.

Since 2013, VF Corp has collaborated with the Hinrich Foundation to advance talent development across Asia through joint scholarships, and since 2018, in the development of the Master of Global Trade. Today, VF employs a multi-year talent development approach to develop next-generation leadership staff through each intake of the program.

Managing Director of VF Asia, Gareth Brooks, noted: "Our direct operations in Asia employ 35,000 people, and our indirect reach through our partners and vendors is over 1 million. As a result of our scale and drive for continuous

improvement, we have a critical need to constantly develop our next-generation local leaders to ensure the sustainable development of our business. This is directly in line with our purpose statement and mission to develop people throughout our teams.

VF Asia HR Manager, Emily Nguyen, said: "The MGT is a powerful program to equip our up-and-coming leaders with management insight and international soft skills they need to grow their responsibility in our organization. We are excited to participate in the course development and ongoing evolution. To that end, the Master of Global Trade offers an excellent solution to the talent development needs of our company and the trade sector as a whole."

Furthermore, all companies stressed the need to have the course delivered in a manner that allows their staff to work full time while studying. For the employer, the corporate requirement to have their high-potential executives be able to study while working full time was central, so that there would be no detriment to current ongoing business operations. Minimal disruption but with maximum learning was the intention behind course programming with a customized calendar and blended learning.

### Cost effective talent development

As the program is run through RMIT Vietnam, which is not government funded, the program needs to operate on a fully sustaining basis. This obviously has ramifications for the costing associated with the delivery of the program, the means by which program revenue is earned and the affordability of the program for students in the region.

Tuition is charged on a per-course basis with the Graduate Certificate of Global Trade comprised of four courses, the Graduate Diploma of Global Trade a further four, and a final four courses for the Master of Global Trade qualification. Total current tuition cost for all 12 courses of the Master of Global Trade is available by contacting RMIT Vietnam. This represents an extremely competitively priced qualification for a quality Australian graduate degree program delivered internationally.

The Hinrich Foundation has underwritten two-thirds of the tuition fees for the first cohorts, reducing the risk for RMIT to underwrite the program development.

In the alternative funding model developed, RMIT University underwrote the up-front costs of program approval, course development, market testing, course administration and delivery. The Hinrich Foundation – acting as the main catalyst for the program – covered the cost of industry workshops, marketing, employer recruitment and student recruitment. The Foundation then generously



Representing the first Master of Global Trade class are executives with an average of 12 years' work experience in Fortune 500, MNC and SME companies engaged in trade finance, manufacturing, agriculture, pharmaceutical distribution, automotive and trade advisory, among others.

underwrote the first cohorts by providing 25 student scholarships. The Hinrich Foundation-funded scholarships are co-branded with the Employer Partner and cover tuition fees through the Graduate Diploma of Global Trade. As the Hinrich Foundation covers two-thirds of the Master of Global Trade tuition fee, the Employer Partner (or scholar) therefore has very limited budgeting requirements, only the funds needed for the remaining four course components of the master's degree. The Employer Partner also agrees to the necessary two days' study time release for the participant for each course of the program. This joint investment approach – from program design, enhancement, student selection and funding – forms the basis of the partnership between the University, the employers and the Foundation.

Employer Partners are given two scholarships of two-thirds tuition value to grant to one staff member and one external candidate.

Each participating Employer Partner is offered up to two scholarships: one to be allocated to an eligible current high-potential staff member to support talent development and retention; the other to an external candidate drawn from the community at large, a relative of a staff member, or an employee of a client or supplier, to support talent acquisition as well as to extend the network effect of the program.

#### **Partner diversity**

In the first intake, 17 Employer Partners provided candidates for the program. These included Fortune 500 companies (35%), multinational companies (24%) and small and medium-sized companies (41%). The participating industries ranged from footwear, electronics and manufacturing to trade finance, consultancy and trade advisory, representing a total of US\$400 billion in annual revenue and over 900,000 employees worldwide.

The first intake involved 17 employers engaged in global trade, while the second intake attracted 21 employers.

They included global companies such as Siemens, Samsung, HSBC, KPMG, VF Corp and associated organizations in the global value chain such as the New Zealand Trade Commission and the EU Commission to Vietnam. In the second intake, there were 22 Employer Partners whose candidates were supported. The 22 Employer Partners included Fortune 500 companies (43%), multinational companies (22%) and small and medium-sized enterprises (35%). The Hinrich Foundation team carefully reaches out to a variety of sectors across trade value chains and curates the participants to ensure the diversity and quality of the cohort to provide the maximum benefit to students from cross-learning and networking.

#### **Diversity of sectors**

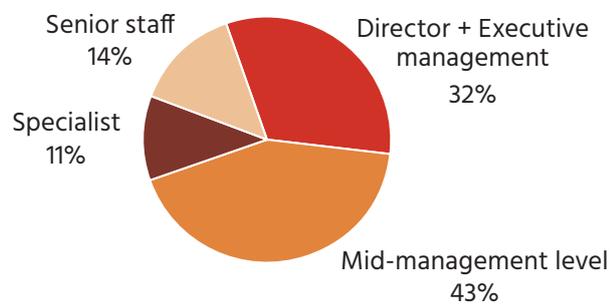
The program is squarely aimed at enhancing the leadership talent acquisition, development and retention of organizations operating across global trade value chains. This broad definition ensures best possible cross-learning opportunities for students to learn from – and form relationships with – other future leaders with expertise across industries, roles and geographies. It was therefore considered appropriate as a key feature of the program that there be managed diversity. In the first intake, students represented 13 sectors; in the second intake, 15 sectors are represented, namely advertising, agriculture, apparel and footwear, automotive, banking, consumer retail, education, electronics, food and beverage, furniture, healthcare / pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, supply chain, trade advisory and trade services.

Sector and role diversity within each cohort creates a valuable alumni network across global value chains.

### Student diversity

The requirement for sector diversity has contributed to the diversity of candidate employment backgrounds. In the first intake, there were 25 scholars with an average of 12 years' work experience ranging from technical specialists to director-level roles. A key feature of the program is to have regional, rather than a restricted, geographical focus. For example, in the first intake, students were drawn from seven nationalities participating from Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Karachi and Singapore, comprising 30% of the cohort. The second intake has executives coming from India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, The Philippines, Singapore, Australia and Peru. There will be ongoing curation of each cohort for sector, role, seniority, experience, qualifications and country.

Management level of intake 1 MGT scholars



The Hinrich Foundation education marketing team, led by Yen Nguyen, works with Employer Partners to help publicize the scholarship to their company's staff and vet potential candidates. In addition to the University's own selection process, the Hinrich Foundation team, coordinated by Phuong Nguyen, Education Program Manager, interviews every single applicant. The Foundation invests in this screening process to ensure alignment of the applicant's experience and aspirations with the program's goals.

### Shared employer and student recruitment responsibility

An extremely beneficial feature of the cooperative partnership arrangement is the shared responsibility undertaken by all parties for employer engagement and student recruitment. RMIT, through its existing marketing activities and corporate relationships, promotes the program, handles student inquiries and admissions.

The Hinrich Foundation, in addition to promoting the program through its networks, has a designated Employer Partner Manager for the program. He and his team provide end-to-end sales support for promoting the program to employers. The Foundation does the heavy lifting when it comes to pitching to organizations, following up, advising on candidate selection, generating letters of intent, undertaking scholarship interviews, confirming scholarship agreements, running a CRM system and onboarding scholars, then pursues renewals for the next cohort. This collaborative approach resulted in 50% of the first intake of Employer Partners being identified by the Hinrich Foundation and 50% identified by RMIT Vietnam. Once identified, the Hinrich Foundation team confirms their interest in the program through letters of intent and subsequently, scholarship agreements.

Employer Partner and student recruitment is shared between RMIT and Hinrich Foundation in a coordinated end-to-end sales cycle.

“Master of Global Trade has built on the strength of our participating NZTE team member, furthering her comprehension of the complexities of trade and professional skills and enhancing her capability to support New Zealand’s trade in Vietnam. A testament to the quality of the program is our scholars’ drive to share the MGT opportunity with our stakeholders to extend the benefit to their teams.”

Karlene Davis  
Consul General / Vietnam Trade  
Commissioner  
New Zealand Trade and Enterprise

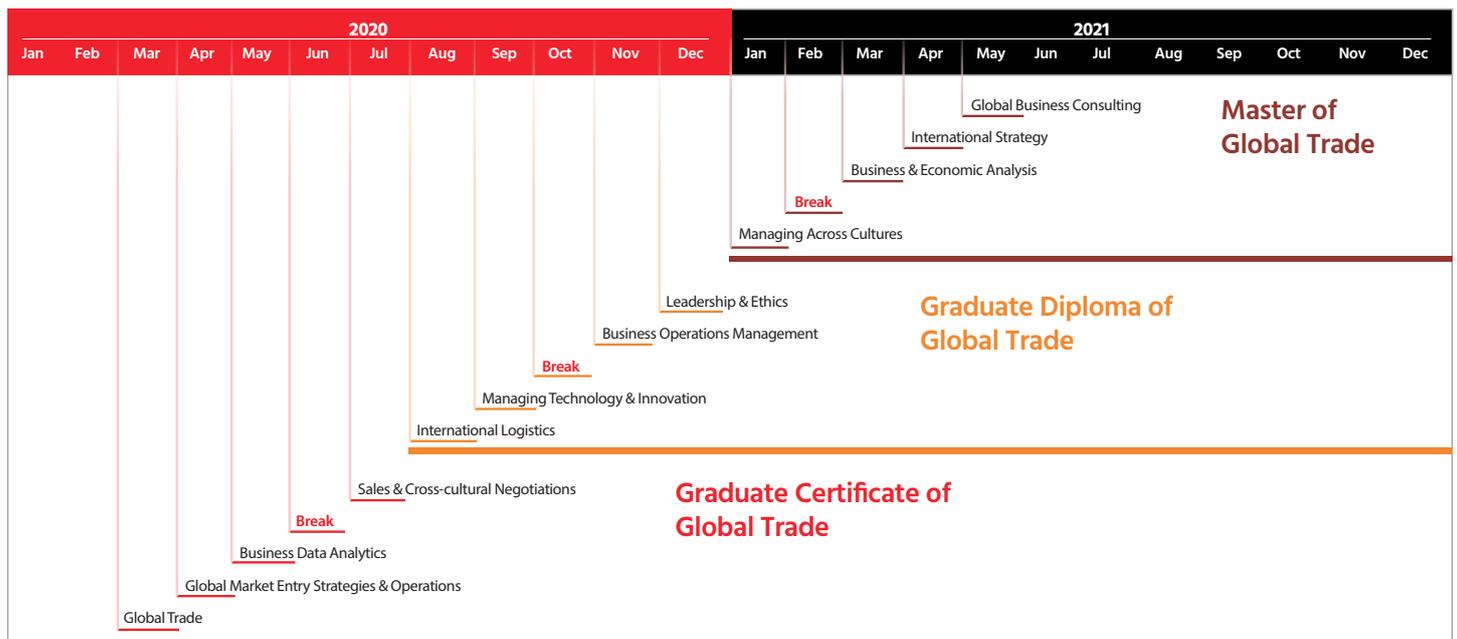
Concurrently, Employer Partners evaluate their existing staff and their external contacts to identify suitable candidates. For example, VF Corp (which owns iconic brands such as The North Face, Timberland and Nautica) ran an internal application and review process for the selection of their candidate. All of the Fortune 500 companies with candidates currently in the program have renewed for intake 2 and have indicated the likelihood of involvement for multiple intakes in the future. Employer Partners such as HSBC and New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (among others) have graciously provided personal introductions to clients who they believe may have candidates who can benefit from the program. Interestingly, current participants from both intakes one and two have joined the recruitment effort and are proactively sourcing suitably qualified applicants for the program.

### Customized program calendar

While both employers and employees are enthusiastic about this learning opportunity, there is a requirement that candidates will continue their full-time employment whilst also aiming to achieve timely course completion. To accommodate this, a customized course calendar, independent of the usual yearly academic calendar, was designed with 12 courses delivered over 15 months. In addition to directed learning via the RMIT online learning management system (LMS), students are required to attend monthly on-campus four-day weekend intensives (Friday to Monday).

Each course features a four-day intensive weekend and 12 courses are delivered over 15 months. To address travel challenges, RMIT offers blended remote delivery.

More recently, with Covid-19 and related travel restrictions, there was a need for greater flexibility, quick responses to environmental changes and a coordinated effort to keep the program on track. Given the University’s existing online capabilities and the cohort approach to the class structure, RMIT was well prepared to transfer the program online, but this required significant commitment and coordination from all parties. The four-day intensive in March 2020 was cut

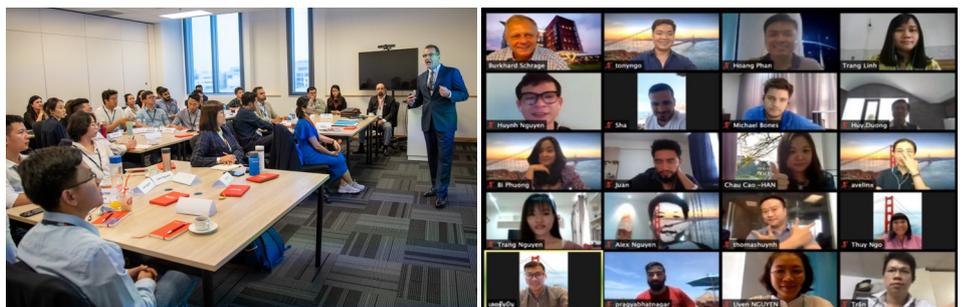


The program is offered in a blended learning mode that enables busy executives to work full-time while studying.

short to three days so that students, Foundation staff and lecturers could travel before restrictions were put into place.

With the support of Professor Mathews Nkhoma, Dean of the School of Business & Management, and backed by Professor Peter Coloe, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global Development and Vice-President, Dr Clarke and the lecturer of Global Market Entry Strategy & Operations, Dr Burkhard Schrage, quickly shuffled the order of courses, including moving some forward by several months. With some urgency, lecturers were required to re-work face-to-face intensive material for remote delivery, populating the University's learning management system with speed.

The consequence is that, earlier than planned, the program switched seamlessly to "blended remote delivery", with students joining online from Hanoi, Karachi and Singapore, while the remaining cohort were in attendance on campus for their four-day intensive. In subsequent classes, lecturers were in New Zealand and Australia while the students were either in class in Ho Chi Minh City or joining online from wherever they were.



The program delivery mode also enables students to participate in the intensives even if they are unable to travel due to restrictions brought about by Covid-19.

Interestingly, while the Employer Partners were in total support of the re-formatting, there was initial push-back from students in the program who wanted to postpone the course until they could resume face-to-face interaction. Once again, the Foundation stepped in with Mr Hinrich, together with the CEO and Program Director, meeting with student representatives by video conference to discuss the options. They discussed the real-world opportunity the crisis presented for the students to deal with uncertainty and the need to pivot to new modes of learning. The students began to appreciate that new approaches were a platform for them to be experts in the new remote learning, working and communications environment. The response by all key stakeholders is an excellent example of a fast engaging collaboration between the University, students and companies with active leadership from the Foundation. The quick retooling required the garnering of support from all stakeholders; it was challenging, but essential to ensure the program's survival.

### Practitioner Professors

Another stipulation from industry partners and the Hinrich Foundation is that teaching staff on the program must be "Practitioner Professors." This is the expectation that academic staff who teach on the program demonstrate significant international trade-related business experience related to their course,

**Practitioner Professors have significant international business experience in addition to academic and teaching qualifications.**

in addition to academic qualifications and teaching expertise. This was considered imperative to ensure the program is up-to-date with global realities in the rapidly changing area of international trade, as well as engage and address the practical needs of the experienced management-level students.

“The practitioner professors and guest speakers from various industries within the global trade value chain provide incredible value to the MGT. Our team members are actively involved in trade, day in and day out, and the real-world experiences shared by these professionals is invaluable.”

Roy Jahoda  
CEO

Innolux Footwear Vietnam

In order to provide students with a rich depth of trade expertise, a number of adjunct industry professors are engaged. For example, for the first course that students undertake, Global Trade, one of the co-lecturers is Stephen Olson, Adjunct Associate Professor at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and a Research Fellow of the Hinrich Foundation, who was a member of the US negotiating team for both NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and CUSFTA (Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement).

In the final and capstone course of the program, Global Consulting, the co-lecturer for the course is Warwick Cliene, CEO and Chairman of KPMG Vietnam and Cambodia, who is an Industry Adjunct Professor at RMIT Vietnam.

Extensive use is also made of industry partners as guest speakers, often drawn from Employer Partners' senior staff, who share topical industry knowledge directly in the course. Each course has a minimum of three industry guest speakers, and throughout the course they are drawn from sectors across the trade spectrum. These have included:

- Will Mackereth, Supply Chain Director at Nestlé Vietnam, the fastest growing food and beverage company in Vietnam, with over US\$600 million of direct investment in Vietnam since 1992
- Spenser Au, former CEO of Global Sources, the international trade facilitation company
- Tobias Gruemmer, Area Head of Operations at Maersk, the global leader in end-to-end shipping services, operating in 130 countries and employing over 76,000 people worldwide
- Entrepreneur Samuel Maruta, Co-founder of Marou, Faiseurs de Chocolat, a manufacturer and exporter of single-source chocolate from Vietnam
- Andrew Schroth, international trade lawyer and partner of Grunfeld, Desiderio, Lebowitz, Silverman & Klestadt LLP, one of the US' largest law firms devoted exclusively to international trade and customs matters
- Andy Ho, CIO of VinaCapital, one of Vietnam's leading investment management and real estate development firms, with a diversified portfolio of \$3 billion in assets under management
- Alex Capri, former partner and regional lead of KPMG's International Trade and Customs practice in Asia, and now a lecturer at National University of Singapore.

The Master of Global Trade program encourages senior executives from the Employer Partner companies to be guest speakers to give insight into real-world, real-time challenges facing their businesses.

**Focus on experiential learning, not formal examinations**

With the recognition that authenticity is an increasing expectation in modes of assessment, the evaluation of the knowledge and skills acquired is not undertaken through formal examinations but through the use of authentic assessment. Simply put, a short answer exam would be entirely inappropriate for a strategy course where students need to demonstrate their skill in developing, communicating and executing a strategic plan amid a fast-paced uncertain environment.

RMIT is a champion of authentic assessment for demonstrating true subject competency.

Authentic assessment is RMIT’s genuine approach to demonstrating true competency of subject matter. For instance, students work on a trade-related problem from a partner organization which has been further developed by the academic lead in each course. Students are required to undertake additional research, analyze the data, provide a recommended solution to the issue and to later reflect on the exercise and any feedback received. The aim of authentic assessment is to provide a form of assurance of learning through the undertaking of real-world tasks.

**EMPLOYER PARTNER HIGHLIGHT**



<b>Founded</b>	1987 / 1818
<b>Revenue (2019)</b>	\$29.8 billion
<b>Employees</b>	219,000
<b>Services</b>	Actuarial Assurance Financial / Legal / Tax advice Consulting

KPMG is one of the world’s leading professional services firms, providing innovative business solutions and audit, tax and advisory services to many of the world’s largest organizations.

RMIT University Vietnam has had a strong relationship with KPMG over many years. Currently, Warrick Cleine, the CEO of KPMG Vietnam and Cambodia, is an RMIT adjunct professor for the Master of Global Trade and also the Chairman of the Master of Global Trade Employer Partner Advisory Committee (EPAC).

Warrick notes that “the dedication and vision of the group of companies who helped to develop the course, who have their leadership staff in the program and join me on the advisory committee is outstanding. It is clear

that the Master of Global Trade is unique in many ways, and the fact that is developed by employers, for employers, helps our team to better meet our critical talent development requirements.”

The KPMG-Hinrich Global Trade Leader scholar in Intake 1, Binh Le, is the Director of Global Trade and Customs as well as Integrated International Tax at KPMG Vietnam. Binh said, “the program provides me with an enormous opportunity to catch up with the trends in global trade and to better understand the complexity of cross border trading activities. The course also helps me connect with professors from industry and other experts in my cohort who are eager to share their knowledge and build a long-term network.”

To offer more contextualized tasks for student assessment, industry partners are asked to provide input into the issues, cases or dilemmas that are used for evaluation purposes. Industry partners, along with RMIT professors and guest lecturers, also serve as judges on panels to assess the practical competency with which students address a specific assignment – whether that be presentations, case studies, simulations or other activities.

Experiential learning engages students in the learning environment with conceptual material in an applied manner.

Critical to the success of the Master of Global Trade – and unique to RMIT – is a commitment to experiential learning which is essentially learning through observation, experiences and reflection. Students in the learning environment engage with conceptual material in an applied manner.

For example, the program includes the Hinrich Sustainable Trade Policy Advisory Simulation where student teams are organized to represent countries with diverse trade views and are challenged to formulate solutions based on the Hinrich Foundation Sustainable Trade Index to advance their country's trade sustainability. After a full day of intense research, collaboration and negotiation, students pitch their recommendations to a panel of 'national ministers' who evaluate their proposals – all monitored by a team of judges who critique the robustness of the research as well as their teamwork, presentation skills and the practicality of their recommendations.

In addition to negotiation, teamwork and public speaking skills, students also become aware that trade issues are extremely complex and must balance economic, social and economic factors to be sustainable amidst the ever-present reality of scarce resources and competing local, national and international factors.

Students receive access to up-to-date, curated online resources that ensure currency of content.

#### **No prescribed text books**

As part of the University's strategy to facilitate digitally enabled, industry relevant, and work integrated learning experiences, RMIT Vietnam has implemented a "no prescribed textbook" initiative, shifting from hardcopy textbooks to curated online resources. This strategy reduces the expense to students, enhances students' digital competency, and addresses problems such as the diminished currency of textbooks (whose content quickly dates) and reliance on structured text by academic staff.

Consequently, RMIT University in Vietnam has significantly increased its online repository, which now includes over 300 databases, 300,000 e-books and 120,000 journal titles available at anytime from anywhere. As a new program, the Master of Global Trade benefited from a curated approach resulting in the development of a library of contemporary, relevant, accessible material that is easily and quickly updated as changes occur in the international trade environment. The Hinrich Foundation's trade policy research division and Employer Partners assist with identifying relevant materials for curation by the professors.

Networking occurs during the course and continues after graduation through the Hinrich Foundation Alumni Association.

#### **Participant engagement with a larger network of companies**

An integral part of the program is the building of professional trade networks for students across global trade value chains. The objective is to facilitate the expansion of a scholar's professional work contacts and for them to build cross-functional relationships that are critical for their personal and career development.

“The MGT offers an exceptional opportunity to an international student body as well as the global Employer Partners by facilitating the development of strong networks that value diversity and respect cultural sensitivities whilst pursuing sustainable growth in global trade. Additionally, Hinrich Foundation’s Alumni Association offers benefits for our nominated scholars through lifelong learning and engagement.”

Parvez Ghias  
CEO

Habib University Foundation -  
a House of Habib philanthropic  
initiative

Within the program itself, this starts with the strong cohort approach to each intake. Within the cohort, the students move through the same courses at the same time thereby strengthening the interaction in the group. To ensure strong networking and cross-function learning, there is deliberate pre-arranging of most groupings for activities, presentations and assignments in all courses. The Hinrich Foundation also has in place activities to create cross-cohort engagement to ensure a strong and growing network of trade professionals.

Graduates of the program join the Hinrich Foundation Alumni Association which is supported with the resources of the Hinrich Foundation. This association provides numerous trainings to support alumni professional and personal development, plus organizes networking events to build and maintain lifelong relationships between fellow scholars and alumni, Employer Partners and other stakeholders engaged across global trade value chains. The Alumni Association is a continuously expanding resource of hundreds of alumni working in trade around the world.

Additionally, industry partners are encouraged to offer senior staff as mentors. Mentoring is an important part of developing leadership talent and students benefit from the mentor’s expertise and guidance. The Alumni Association offers structured mentoring opportunities through their online community platform as well as in-person arrangements. Similarly, RMIT University offers mentorship opportunities, training for industry partners and student mentor-mentee alignment.

### Additional governance oversight

In addition to curriculum design and delivery oversight by the University, Employer Partners are also engaged in program governance and review. The Employer Partner Advisory Committee (EPAC) comprises highly engaged Employer Partners, as well as University and Foundation personnel, who meet after each stage of the program to assess the program’s operations and

Employer Partners and scholars are involved in governance and review of the program, ensuring its ongoing quality and relevance.



Ongoing and substantive employer engagement is critical to ensure the Master of Global Trade continues to deliver the most relevant learning for students and benefits to their employers. Here, the inaugural meeting of the Employer Partner Advisory Committee meets at the KPMG Vietnam office with senior representatives from Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Karachi, Manila and Singapore.

outcomes. It has three sub-committees focused on program enhancement, industry outreach and scholar engagement.

The EPAC provides an official platform for Employer Partners to offer constructive input and feedback on the state of the program. This ensures the program addresses current and future industry needs, and continues to be a worthwhile investment for Employer Partners and students. Student representatives are invited to EPAC meetings to provide direct scholar feedback on each course and overall course administration.

These student representatives have been elected by the cohort for positions on the Scholar Advisory Committee (SAC). The SAC provides a constructive interface between the program participants, the University and the Foundation. Though the SAC, students are encouraged to be very active in providing input into course scheduling, technology usage, program enhancement, Employer Partner engagement and candidate recruitment for upcoming intakes.

**Broader industry participants are also invited to be involved in pre-intake program review.**

Prior to a new intake, a program review workshop lead by RMIT program developers brings together industry leaders for an interactive program review session. The workshop confirms the program objectives, alignment with industry needs and captures employer input into program design, to ensure that the courses and program are continually refined, updated and relevant to employers in the sector. Unlike the EPAC, which is made up of Employer Partners only and meets on a regular basis, the program review workshop provides an annual opportunity to bring together a larger group of industry stakeholders to assess the program from a broader perspective.

# Conclusions

The Master of Global Trade is an innovative, industry-driven program where Employer Partners, scholars, RMIT University and the Hinrich Foundation are critical and contributing stakeholders.

Companies across global trade value chains are faced with a leadership talent shortage. It is imperative for their business sustainability that they provide their rising stars with the development necessary for them to reach their full potential. Ready-made programs often fall short in delivering on specific sector needs. As this case has examined, one successful approach has been to develop university partnerships driven by a trade-focused philanthropy to build a customized program in a way that will quickly evolve with the sector's accelerating challenges and needs.

Universities are deeply desirous of industry partnerships. For universities, stepping up and maximizing corporate collaborations is becoming increasingly more relevant from both a reputational and financial perspective. They want the input, access to case material, equipment, research opportunities to test out new thinking, problems for students to solve, to offer guest speakers, advisory board participants and assessment judges. They want advice and validation of current practice, industry exposure and internship opportunities for students, employment and mentor prospects for their graduates. And yes, they want financial support through awards, scholarships for students, research funding, co-funded positions for staff and sponsorship in general. They often just don't know who, or how, to ask and sometimes seem to be awaiting approach by industry instead of proactively looking.

"We at Nestlé aim to sustain our engagement in the MGT by sending scholars for consecutive intakes and contributing our industry expertise to better the education of these future global trade leaders; it is an excellent opportunity for both our team and our company in one of our most dynamic markets."

Will Mackereth  
Supply Chain Director  
Nestlé Vietnam

For employers, engagement with universities can be extremely advantageous and the combined efforts of the industry partner and tertiary institution can have a synergistic effect in assisting with issues faced by business. Proactive engagement with universities ensures a steady flow of appropriately equipped graduates into their business, can address skills gaps for existing staff, offers leadership development and retention opportunities for key personnel and ultimately, equips business with flexible responses to increased competition and the need for sustainable growth. A close relationship between industry and universities can clearly provide benefits to industry partners.

There are numerous opportunities that could also extend to full program development as in this case study. The Master of Global Trade has proved that close collaboration from ideation and development through to recruitment and delivery is a powerful new approach to employer and academic partnerships, driven by the vision and ongoing, active participation of the Hinrich Foundation. The Master of Global Trade is an innovative, industry-driven program where Employer Partners, scholars, RMIT University and the Hinrich Foundation are critical and contributing stakeholders.

The feedback to date from both scholars and industry partners has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly in relation to the authenticity of the industry-aligned professors and program content, the program delivery, the building of industry networks and scholarship opportunities.

For industry employers, this approach demonstrates a mechanism to strengthen professional skills and leadership development, ensure high-performing staff retention and open a pipeline for future talent acquisition – while also creating an ecosystem to support the next-generation leaders in the sector. It has also encouraged industry employers to take a holistic approach to talent development by proactively strengthening employers’ engagement with a university.

This type of collaboration represents the next evolution of industry engagement, a step up from the more common transactional model to a more fully collaborative model. It involves multiple levels of engagement and has created new models for regional collaboration and alternative shared funding models.

The Master of Global Trade has been a means to better prepare mid-career, high-potential working students for the rapidly changing work environment by aligning curriculum to meet the needs of employers in global trade sectors and to advance alternative educational methodologies. For participants, this approach has enabled educational opportunities for high-potential individuals in a cost-effective and time-sensitive manner. The experientially and industry aligned rich learning experience equips them with knowledge, skills and networks to make lifelong leadership contributions to international trade.

### Future developments

So, what does the future hold, and what might be the next steps for this collaboration of key stakeholders in the global trade sector? There are four areas to explore:

#### 1. Sustainability

To ensure further viability and growth of the program, companies can continue to advance their talent development, retention and acquisition, by incorporating full and partial scholarship funding within their training plans. Industry bodies, associations and government training funding can also be encouraged.

#### 2. Employer Partner industry engagement

A continuous stream of new industry partners is needed to ensure the strongest industry alignment of the program, identify experienced and qualified candidates, and provide the necessary ongoing employment for those individuals. Importantly, the continuous input from industry of their expected outcomes for their staff in the program and those recruited from the Master of Global Trade is critical to continuing program value, and therefore, program sustainability.

#### 3. Continuous innovation

For the University, it will continue to seek innovative means of providing the program with refreshed content and experiential learning. The Foundation is interested in expanding the reach of the Master of Global Trade by supporting more participants using micro-credentials from within the courses. This is essentially the breaking up of course content into even

The partners in this program are continuing to innovate to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of the program for the global trade sector.

smaller “bite-sized” components of learning that can be credentialed to meet specific needs of staff and employers. In this way, the investment made by all the partners in developing and maintaining course content can be further leveraged to reach more scholars. Greater attention will also be given to recognition for prior learning, pre-program student diagnostics, personal program design and career advancement.

#### 4. A digital emphasis

If there is one key lesson that has come from Covid-19, it is that personal and business relationships must have digital support, particularly when circumstances require that most of our interactions, work and study be done remotely. This requires students to not only acquire the mechanics of digital skills but the ability to push through adversity and motivate themselves. For the Master of Global Trade students, who are typically older, more mature and seasoned, while they like to interact with their fellow students, this is less important than for 19-year-old freshmen who are trying to develop their social skills and engage in self-discovery. Increasingly in the program, attention will be given to incorporating new pedagogy for a digital environment and the use of Artificial Intelligence for both learning and student administration.

#### 5. Geographic expansion

The final area of development is, unsurprisingly, geographic expansion. By its very nature, global trade is global and there are many other organizations and their employees who would benefit from such as program. It is anticipated that this geographical expansion would be in collaboration with other higher education partners (RMIT has currently over 200 educational partners around the world) thus adding further facets to what is already a highly collaborative educational endeavor.

RMIT and the Hinrich Foundation recognize that there are numerous business problems from an employer’s perspective for which universities can provide assistance, such as the challenge of continually addressing new capabilities in a constantly changing business environment, the need to motivate and retain talented employees, professional development with minimal disruption to the company, and the need to find cost-effective training solutions that provide immediate return on investment through the application of new knowledge and skills acquired.

RMIT and the Hinrich Foundation look forward to continuing to enhance how industry and academia work together to advance human capacity in the export trade sector in Asia.

To participate and learn more, please visit [hinrichfoundation.com](https://hinrichfoundation.com) and contact the Hinrich Foundation at [partnerships@hinrichfoundation.com](mailto:partnerships@hinrichfoundation.com).

# Author bio:

## Professor Gael McDonald

Professor Gael McDonald is Professor Emeritus Global Development Portfolio of RMIT University. She served as President of RMIT Vietnam from 2014 to 2019. Previously, she was Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Business and Law at Deakin University and Secretary of the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC).

Professor McDonald has a Bachelor of Business from Massey University, New Zealand, a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Western Australia, and her Doctorate was obtained from The London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom.

Professor McDonald's senior management experience has included being Vice President International, Vice President of Research, Dean of Business and Professor of Business Ethics at Unitec, New Zealand. She is also a past President of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM), and has three times been a member of the National New Zealand Performance Based Research Fund Panel in Business and Economics (PBRF).

She was appointed a member of the Australian Research Quality Framework Panel for Economics, Commerce and Management and is the Life fellow of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM).



**Gael McDonald**

Professor Emeritus  
Global Development Portfolio  
RMIT University

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The Hinrich Foundation is a unique Asia-based philanthropic organization that works to advance mutually beneficial and sustainable global trade.

We believe sustainable global trade strengthens relationships between nations and improves people's lives. We support original research and education programs that build understanding and leadership in global trade.

We are an authoritative source of knowledge, sharp analysis and fresh thinking for policymakers, business, media and scholars engaged in global trade. We are building a network of next-generation trade leaders by partnering with universities and corporations across global value chains.

By supporting original research and education programs, we are creating an ecosystem of sustainable global trade influencers who can improve trade practices.

We initiate and publish research that offers a better understanding of key global trade issues. We take a neutral, objective, fact-based approach. Media, business, government and industry come to us for fresh thinking, strategic insights and deeper analysis into the issues impacting global trade outcomes.

We believe the most effective way to advance sustainable global trade is to invest in informing and training the people engaged in trade. The Foundation creates educational initiatives that allow participants to gain deeper knowledge about global trade. These include **the RMIT University Master of Global Trade delivered in partnership with the Hinrich Foundation**, as well as scholarships for graduate studies, short courses for media, government and executives, and trade negotiation simulations.

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#### PARTNER INQUIRIES

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There are many ways you can help advance sustainable global trade. Join our training programs, participate in our events, or partner with us in our programs.  
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