Becoming a Chartered Secretary
A rewarding career at the heart of business
What is a Chartered Secretary?

Chartered Secretaries are highly sought after professionals who play a key role helping to ensure that organisations comply with regulatory requirements, and maintain good corporate governance and business ethics. Members of this profession have become increasingly important as the regulatory environment has become more complex.

Becoming a Chartered Secretary will give you a broad skill set in corporate law, accounting and finance, governance, strategy, tax and corporate secretarial practice. You will acquire an excellent knowledge of the legal, regulatory and corporate governance framework within which organisations operate together with strong administrative skills.

In an ever-changing world, the work of the company secretary is both fascinating and varied. At HSBC, my role continues to present new challenges and opportunities which stretch me and members of the global company secretarial function in ways which we could never have expected when embarking on this career route. This is what makes our role so interesting, dynamic and rewarding.

Ben Mathews FCIS, Group Company Secretary, HSBC Holdings plc
Sample employment opportunities for Chartered Secretaries

Company secretary in a wide range of different entities (listed companies, private and public sector companies as well as charities)

Company secretary working in professional services

Senior management roles, such as head of compliance and/or administration

Entrepreneur

Executive and non-executive director, chief executive and board chairman

If Chartered Secretaries are true to their calling, they are the conscience of the organisation they work for, be it commercial, financial, educational, or otherwise. They uphold the governance and integrity of their workplaces and leave the world a better place than they found it.

Edith Shih FCIS FCS(PE), Head Group General Counsel and Company Secretary, CK Hutchison Holdings Ltd
Developing your potential

Chartered Secretaries have a range of different career paths to choose from. As a company secretary in a listed company, you will be on a fast-track to a high-level role working with senior management and the board of directors. Experienced Chartered Secretaries make excellent candidates for board postings and often go on to become chairmen, chief executives and directors.

Chartered Secretaries also work for corporate services firms, or in the corporate services department of legal or accounting firms. Working in corporate services provides an excellent foundation for your career, giving you experience in a wide range of different sectors of the economy.

The Chartered Secretarial qualification will help you in your career advancement. It has taken me to my current role as CEO of a major corporate services provider, where my challenge and opportunity is to identify products and services that meet the needs of our clients in a changing world with enhanced international governance standards.

Natalia Seng FCIS FCS(PE), Chief Executive Officer – China & Hong Kong, Tricor Group/ Tricor Services Ltd
Sample roles and responsibilities of company secretaries

- Facilitating board and shareholder meetings
- Ensuring regulatory compliance
- Coordinating the publication of corporate reports
- Advising the board and management on all aspects of corporate governance
- Handling communications with stakeholders

I was attracted to the corporate secretarial profession because it is so multifaceted. To be a good company secretary you need to understand governance, the law, management and you also need to understand finance. The great advantage for Chartered Secretaries is that, once you get this qualification, you can choose which way you want to go.

Dr Maurice Ngai FCIS FCS(PE), CEO of SW Corporate Services Group Ltd
Joining a respected and international profession

The Chartered Secretarial qualification is recognised and respected in Hong Kong, but it will also give you the skills and the opportunity to work in a range of different jurisdictions around the world. Graduates of The Hong Kong Institute of Chartered Secretaries (HKICS) are also graduates of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA) in the UK, which has over 33,000 members and 10,000 students globally. The HKICS is a founder member of the Corporate Secretaries International Association (CSIA) which represents approximately 70,000 practitioners in more than 80 countries.

Members of the HKICS will also have good opportunities to work in Mainland China. Not only is there a huge demand in the Mainland for governance professionals, but the HKICS has become increasingly involved in the development of the corporate secretarial profession on the Mainland.

It is increasingly recognised that the role of the corporate secretarial profession will be critical in the coming decades for the sustainable development and success of corporations.

Polly Wong FCIS FCS(PE), Company Secretary and Financial Controller, Dynamic Holdings Ltd
The future is bright – there is a greater and more active role for company secretaries to play. I think we are establishing ourselves as the guardians of corporate governance.

Susie Cheung FCIS FCS(PE), General Counsel and Company Secretary, The Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Ltd
Your career path

Your route to membership of the HKICS starts with a recognised university degree or a recognised professional qualification. University graduates in accounting, finance, management, corporate governance or law are eligible to apply for exemption from IQS examinations. You may then register as a student of the HKICS and opt to either sit the International Qualifying Scheme (IQS) examinations or take one of the post-graduate collaborative courses (at master’s level) set up in association with three local universities. Students who successfully complete the IQS or collaborative courses become graduates of both the HKICS and ICSA.

Once graduates have acquired the requisite work experience, they may apply to become a member of the HKICS/ICSA. All prospective members must declare they are fit and proper for admission to HKICS and be recommended by two referees who are professionals, one of whom must be a member of HKICS/ICSA. Successful applicants become an Associate of the HKICS/ICSA and, with the requisite further work experience, Associates may apply to become Fellows.

With the opening up of the Mainland Chinese capital market, the Chinese board secretarial community continues to bring value to companies and society. The Chartered Secretarial qualification equips Chinese board secretaries with key multi-disciplinary knowledge in law, finance and governance as they increasingly get in touch with the global market.

Dr Gao Wei FCIS FCS,
Board Secretary and General Counsel,
Sinotrans Ltd

Over the years the role has developed into a trusted advisory role to the board, the board chairman and the executives. Sometimes the company secretary and the chairman may be fronting issues before the board has even started to discuss them. So it is very exciting to be in that space.

Bill Wang FCIS FCS, Head of Group Listings, Asia and Head of Subsidiary Governance, Greater China,
Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Ltd
ARE YOU READY?
Collaborative Courses (CCA)

City University of Hong Kong
Master of Science in Professional Accounting & Corporate Governance (Corporate Governance stream)

Open University of Hong Kong
Master of Corporate Governance

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Master of Corporate Governance

International Qualifying Scheme (IQS)

Professional Programme I
Strategic and Operations Management
Hong Kong Corporate Law
Hong Kong Financial Accounting
Hong Kong Taxation

Professional Programme II
Corporate Governance
Corporate Secretaryship
Corporate Administration
Corporate Financial Management

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

Academic qualifications
Relevant degree (such as law, accounting, corporate governance, finance or management), or non-relevant degree

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Professional qualifications (gained by examinations)

Members of:
ACCA
HKICPA
CIMA
AICPA
CGA Canada
CPA Australia
Law Society

OR

OR

CCA PROGRAMMES

IQS EXAMINATIONS
Graduate (ICSA Grad)

3 – 6 years
relevant work experience gained before, during or after study

Associate (ACIS, ACS)

8 years
relevant work experience at senior level

Fellow (FCIS, FCS)
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