

MEET THE STUDENTS

ICATS students are located across the globe and have very individual motivations and objectives for studying with ICATS. In this edition we introduce you to two of our students who share their experiences of studying with ICATS

Meet Mahiob Fadila, one of our current students, a multilingual fine-fragrance specialist who tells us about his role with Alard Beauty Store.

I develop fine fragrance products for private projects, after selecting essential oils for production; I take care of all the following phases until it is delivered for sales or as an obsequie in private events. A fulfilment set that begins with assisting my client with the design and the selection of the components, followed by the purchase of the selected materials, locally or imported, and involves various subcontractors such as specialized laboratories or air transport companies, because the vast majority of my products are produced in Barcelona and delivered to Dubai. Last but not least are the legal registration and certification of the product and the correspondent tests and analysis to enable it for safe human use, according to the country of origin and local market law and legislation.

The global lockdown in 2020 offered me lot of time to think about my career, and realize that I like my job, but I needed more scientific preparation to gain enough skills, for understanding better the perfume creation process, not to a level of a chemist, but enough to be able to comprehend better the production rules and related restrictions. Furthermore, I also wanted to expand my professional opportunities.

In my case, learning could be in Spanish, Catalan or English, since my German is too rusty and in Arabic and Hebrew I couldn't find any distance or online learning. ICATS website offered exactly the kind of education I was looking for, scientifically grounded models to enable me to understand the theories and nomenclatures I am surrounded with at work. And the option of achieving IFEAT certificates, on the way to the final title, encouraged me even more, because being self-employed with family and two kids limits my budget and time availability.

Going back to chemistry lessons was not easy at all, but obviously I needed it, and I took my time to repeat the readings, and recall the lessons from high school. Because neither my Bachelor's in Business Administration nor my Master's in The Internationalization of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises had any chemistry in the program, so I was away for enough time not to remember.

It is not just the chemistry but also the overall understanding of the industry. Thus by delivering the modules report and gaining the points for the IFEAT certificate I have got to understand how perfume became an industry and the overwhelming development of perfumes, followed by its diversified applications through the decades, affected with the worlds wars and effecting



on the worlds fashion and economy. I am not sure in which order it should be, but understood how it came together.

It would have been a big advantage if I could have access to samples of the ingredients, covered by the course modules and in the text books, which are described so meticulously in such extreme that you get the feeling you smell it while reading. Therefore, I started gathering my personal samples collection and dedicating time to learn about each one of them.

I was very keen on reading carefully about ingredients contained in perfumes I use personally or included in the perfumes that I produce, a part of gaining general knowledge; it is quite useful to be able to understand the utility and the selectivity. Although, also dedicating some space and time in my calendar for learning about ingredients sources and production methods, so understanding advantages and disadvantages of synthetic and natural ingredients.

IFRA, RIFM, REXPAN... was not the most fun modules subjects to go through, but one of the most appreciated, and most reserved for continuance future consultation. Since it explains, who is who in the industry and how rules are made, so where to go in case of doubts about regulations, material toxicology report, grades or applications. And much more information, that usually is provided by the material supplier in the Material Safety Data Sheet.

I had the chance to practice by reading the reports about the safety of ButylPhenyl methylpropional (p-BMHCA) in cosmetic products, and follow the changes on the shelf products immediately, because it was banned and entered into force and application from 1 March 2022. Some products were replaced and others simply discontinued, although it is impressive to see, how strong the impact of one molecule is, on the whole industry.

Lot of curious work scenarios are justified to me now, processes that we learned and applied because the situations were predicted systematically and aimed with solutions. But after learning the course modules I gained a scientific explanation, although it provided me with new ideas for future designs.

It is not easy to spare time for learning being self-employed, so I feel lucky I could made it so far, and full of interest to continue learning, especially after trying ICATS distance learning methods.

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Meet Chong Chun Hang a flavour specialist working with Matrix Flavours and Fragrances in South East Asia

Flavouring is one of the key ingredients in food but we don't often consider that flavourings exist as a standalone ingredient. "Permitted Flavouring Substances" appear in the food ingredients list of almost every packaged food that we consume. I had totally no idea what that meant till I started working with it. I find that people around me are confused whenever I tell them about my career and an explanation is always required. During my Degree study, though "flavouring" was covered but just as a minor subject. We didn't have any idea what a flavour pyramid is – and how flavours are further separated into top note, middle note and base note.

After graduated from Food Science and Nutrition, I was introduced by R&D manager of the company that I had my internship to a flavour house that I am working to date - Matrix Flavours and Fragrances Sdn Bhd. It is the first solely owned flavour house in South East Asia. I have been offered a role of Flavourist and R&D Executive and my role is to perform the matching of customers flavour samples and also work with lab assistants in sample preparation. During flavour matching, samples will be injected into gas chromatography - to unveil flavouring substances in the flavours. Matching may seem easy but presence of substances such as captive raw materials confuse, specialty chemicals are not able to be identified and high impact chemicals are not revealed due to trace amounts. Slowly, I am to perform modification on the flavouring when there are customers request from solvent changing to profile modification.

After 3 years of working, I have been asked by my manager whether I would like to study through the distance learning course offered by ICATS Aroma Education and I started my journey towards achieving the ICATS Postgraduate Diploma. This has been quite exciting for me as I had been considering the ways I could improve my flavour knowledge and was pleased to be granted the chance to go for this course. The experience of distance learning is not always as expected. The biggest challenge in distant learning course is you have to arrange your time very well and stay motivated as it is not the same as conventional learning process where we normally attend all the scheduled courses, fulfil assigned course credit hours and submit assignments in designated timelines.

During my first 2 years, progress was pretty slow due to daily work and my inability to have good time management. Fortunately, when time dragged longer and longer, my desire to complete the course became higher and I sped up my assignment submissions. Then another challenge arose – the selection of a dissertation topic. It was hard for me to think

of an interesting topic. I initially settled on a topic working out experiments in emulsion development, but came to a dead end when I couldn't produce a satisfactory or desired outcome. As a result, I have had to change my topic. My search for another topic was hard and I even consider ending my study by just getting a diploma (without the dissertation). My tutor Peter Whipps is very helpful and has been encouraging me and suggested that I choose a topic related to what I am familiar with. With that discussion and guidance, I managed to come up with another new title.

At the beginning, my tendency to high perfectionism, jeopardized my ability to from begin any writing as I felt the need to compile all the information before writing. Most of my thoughts at the beginning lacked a clear focus and this slowed down the process. After few times of writing, without bothering too much whether idea generated is right or wrong, I was able to jot everything down and begin my first draft. Filtration of the ideas generated can be carried out at later stage and then proofreading is used filter out irrelevant ideas and removing repeated points. Also, mind the word limit (which I have breached few times). This experience will remind me to try to step out without thinking or judging too much as the process of producing a dissertation will in fact help to reach clear conclusions.

The topics in the ICATS course cover an A to Z of industry relevant topics and provide a clear picture of how aroma trades operate. I have been a Science Stream student and enthusiastic to learn more about the technicalities. However, a good product may not reach customers without proper marketing and couldn't gain huge market share if doesn't achieve what customers are looking for. After all, a good product will only be good when it satisfies and caters for their needs, as well as contributing to the brand and the company. The right product is not successful if it is not marketed in the right way. Therefore, a technical person should possess both technical and marketing knowledge.

This course definitely offers well-rounded course material, providing a full picture of aroma trades. I have no regret in study this course as it gets me to know about this industry and it provides a launch pad for me to know more about aroma trades. Despite finishing my studies, I will continue to refer back to the course materials to pick up points that I have missed. This course would be one of my "Bibles".

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