

Life at the SFC

As a whole we realise the importance of a team effort to carry out our work effectively. We recruit individuals from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, in return offering a professional environment with opportunities for career development, work-life balance and the nurturing of ambition.

Following are some of the stories of how our staff came to join the SFC and the different paths their careers have taken during their time with us. The list only gives a selective insight into work at the SFC, but we hope it reflects the source of our strength – our people.

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Lisa Chen
Counsel, Legal Services Division

As a litigator at an international law firm, Lisa Chen’s gaze had to be fixed on the client, the competition and the pursuit of profit. Her days were long and her weekends short; holidays were the exception rather than the norm.

Four years ago she decided to do something about it, and joined the SFC’s Legal Services Division. “It’s a choice between working long hours all the time and having a more balanced life,” she explains.

As legal counsel, her perspective is now from the other side of the table: “The difference is in private practice you only focus on your client’s interest, whereas here you have to look at the bigger picture. What we do and say will have an impact on market practitioners, and you have to think about the interest of the investing public.”

Lisa has been part of a team dealing with some brokerage failures, allowing her to get involved in injunction applications and securing administrators. More recently, she has had the chance to do a variety of prosecution work.

“It’s always nerve-racking to appear before the court but I find it the more interesting part of the job.”

An average month may also see her before the Market Misconduct Tribunal or the Securities and Futures Appeals Tribunal.

Lisa enjoys the flexibility of her job. It allows her to pursue more activities in her free time, including Sunday school, where she works with teenagers, and photography.

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Kenneth Luk
Director, Enforcement Division

Kenneth Luk enjoys a challenge. In the past ten years, he has faced them daily: whether it be painstakingly piecing together shreds of evidence or keeping his cool during a hostile showdown with suspects.

The process of unravelling market misdeeds may require patience and perseverance, but when that crucial break in a case finally happens, it is one that Kenneth finds truly rewarding.

“Many people think it’s a difficult job because it demands us to handle difficult situations and confrontations, but that’s also the challenging and interesting part of the job,” he explains.

It is one he describes as part detective, part strategist. He would build up a case and try to work out how a suspect would respond.

“Every interview is like a game of chess – you need to anticipate and plan for it.”

His efforts saw Kenneth promoted up the ranks: from a Manager when he joined the SFC ten years ago, he was soon promoted to Senior Manager, then to Associate Director and now a Director in the division.

“I feel that we’re doing something for the community, changing people’s behaviour. And you see the results – you see the fruits of our efforts.”

At home, two young sons keep him physically on his toes. At work, he enjoys a professional stimulus: “Every week gives me something new to explore, some new problems to tackle. The job is never boring.”



Nico'la Chan
Executive Secretary to COO

Nico'la Chan is no stranger to multi-tasking. She juggles her job as executive secretary with a busy home life as mother to her 5-year-old daughter. Somehow in between she has managed to fit in a three-year degree in economics and a 12-month course in financial planning.

“I had to keep my performance up at work, then spend time at evening class, and make sure I spent enough time with my daughter,” she explains. “It was a bit stressful at times, but it’s a topic I’m interested in and achieving the degree was enjoyable for me.”

Nico'la believes her endeavours have paid off.

“I have gained a deeper understanding of how the regulator fits into the financial sector, the role it plays and how it interacts with the industry.”

Now, when she prepares notes and information for the COO, she can give a quick outline of the relevance and main points.

Nico'la has been promoted a number of times, first joining the regulator as a Secretary in the Corporate Finance Division, then moving to work as a Senior Secretary in the Commission Secretariat under the Chairman’s Office before taking up her current post.

Nico'la will find herself facing a new set of challenges in the coming year. She will join the External Relations Department as Officer, assisting in the implementation of investor education programmes.

“I’d like to see myself personally grow in my career. I’m particularly glad as I am taking on this new and exciting role with the support of my supervisors.” she says.



Stephen Tisdall
Senior Director, Licensing Department

Anyone reading New Zealander Stephen Tisdall’s resume could be forgiven for doing a double take.

While his career has seen him work as a government lawyer, set up his own practice specialising in securities law and regulation and build up a corporate finance house together with three partners, it has also included two stints at Hong Kong’s securities regulator.

Stephen joined the SFC in 1990 in the Legal Services Division and later moved to New Zealand before returning to the Commission in 2006 as Director of Intermediaries and Investment Products and more recently becoming head of Licensing and Conduct.

In the intervening period he was responsible for preparing initial drafts of the Securities and Futures Ordinance and, almost a decade later, he now describes himself as “living daily with the consequences.”

Re-adjusting to the Commission required a shift in mindset. He explains, “The Commission is a much larger organisation.

This required me to adapt so that I could become part of a team and accommodate the different people with whom I work and their many and varied personalities and working styles.”

Stephen finds his work both interesting and beneficial to Hong Kong.

“I like what the Commission is doing. It’s interesting to be working within the regulatory regime that I played a role in creating.”



Stephen Wong
Manager, Enforcement Division

During his five years at the SFC Stephen Wong has seen the regulator from two sides: the nitty-gritty investigation process, and the loftier policy work.

Having joined as a lawyer from private practice, Stephen’s first role at the SFC was to master the art of investigations, from surveillance and evidence-gathering to wading through accounts and interviewing witnesses.

His job took on a new dimension however when he was moved to work with the CEO as his Personal Assistant for six months. “It gave me the chance to meet senior management – I could see the Commission differently through his eyes,” he explains.

“I understand the SFC is not all about investigations and prosecutions – there’s much more than that.”

He also gained an insight into the priorities of the organisation. “When talking about new targets, aims and objectives, they took into consideration how this would balance with employee’s family lives,” he says.

It is something he himself appreciates as someone who likes to be able to use his time effectively: Stephen was the driving force behind ‘Commission Possible,’ a volunteer group set up by staff.

Their efforts will see them deliver rice dumplings and moon cakes to the elderly during holidays or organise celebrations with mentally disabled children. Stephen’s life as a volunteer started in secondary school: “From there, it became a habit,” he says.



Bowie Chan
Manager, Enforcement Division

Bowie Chan likes having variety in her job. When she first started with the SFC as an Executive Trainee – the regulator’s junior entry level – it wasn’t long before she found herself having to employ a different set of skills.

After a stint with the International team in the Enforcement Division, where Bowie dealt with overseas regulators, she was rotated to the Disciplinary Department.

“In the Disciplinary team, I have to draw heavily on my legal training, while the international work required more people skills.” she explains.

It was also a shift in focus for Bowie, who had previously worked at a bank.

“The SFC is more interesting, you have exposure to a lot of different things.”

Bowie also relied on regular feedback from her peers. “My bosses were very supportive, they gave me a lot of autonomy doing my own cases but still provided guidance so you’re going in the right direction,” Bowie explains.

This support also became crucial for Bowie when she took on extra studies outside her work, completing a Master of Finance from Hong Kong University in 2006 and levels 1 and 2 of the Chartered Financial Analyst Exam. She is currently studying for level 3.

Bowie has been promoted three times since joining in 2004, and currently works as a Manager within the Disciplinary team.