Duty Free World Council suspends Academy initiative; IIR enters liquidation

The Duty Free World Council (DFWC) has suspended its DFWC Academy initiative due to the decision of its partner (*the Institute of International Retail)* to enter voluntary liquidation.

Launched at the 2019 Tax Free World Association Asia Pacific Conference and Exhibition in Singapore, the academy's first Certificate course in duty free and travel retail was delivered to the inaugural group of **online students in September that year**.

The DFWC partnered with Generation Research, its parent company Contineo Labs and Swiss consumer insights expert, m1nd-set on the development of the course content. Providing students with an in-depth understanding of the travel retail landscape, key category brand trends and industry development were among the objectives of the course.

FREE RETURN TO WORK TRAINING COURSE

A free Return to Work training course for frontline sales staff was also **launched in July 2020**, as DF&TR operations slowly re-started amid the devastating impact of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The online training course, which provided staff with guidelines on how to ensure their own safety and that of their customers, **generated positive feedback**.

Sarah Branquinho, President, Duty Free World Council *(fourth from left)* spoke passionately to *TRBusiness* about her hopes for the DFWC Academy at an Aer Rianta International-hosted networking event in Dublin in 2019.

In a statement yesterday evening *(5 January 2020)*, the DFWC said the impact of Covid-19 on the DF&TR industry had been drastic and the resulting collapse in global sales had forced industry stakeholders to cut all discretionary costs, including staff training.

The DFWC added: “Despite strenuous efforts by both the DFWC and IIR to maintain the Academy and promote Academy courses in 2020 – including the provision of a free ‘Return to Work’ course, slashing registration fees for the Certificate course to €50/$61 and attempts to raise bursaries etc. – income to the Academy has dried up since the end of July.”

Moving forward, the DFWC does not foresee the prospects for student enrolments substantially changing until the industry’s recovery gathers pace.

Currently, the DFWC is in discussions with IIR over potential support for students yet to complete their courses and opportunities ‘to protect the significant body of work’ enshrined in the courses.

“As the year progresses and as the duty free and travel retail industry begins its recovery, the DFWC will review potential future opportunities for the DFWC Academy,” the DFWC concluded.

TRBusiness has reached out to the Institute of International Retail Managing Director Derek Hughes for reaction after the company entered voluntary liquidation and will bring you more in due course.