

Working at ADIA —

# An Inside View



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**Eugene Oon Soo Kai**  
**Head of Rewards,**  
**Human Resources Department**

Prior to joining ADIA in 2009, I was a consulting actuary working on the compensation and benefit aspects of corporate mergers in London. Joining ADIA gave me the chance to take my career in a new direction, one where I could use my mathematical background in a different way and learn about the people side of the business, something I have always been curious about.

I joined as a Compensation and Benefits Specialist and, as ADIA evolved and grew, so did my role: first to become a Senior Manager and eventually on to my current position as Head of Rewards. Throughout, I've been supported to grow my skills and broaden my experience. Just recently I was involved in a leadership development programme run by Harvard Business School, which was an extremely valuable experience: I learnt how to

better diagnose problems, make decisions and lead organisational change.

When I joined ADIA, the organisation was embracing new ways of thinking about talent, leadership and organisational capabilities, which underpinned many of the structural changes that were implemented over the ensuing years.

Perhaps one of the defining aspects of working at ADIA is the continuous focus on doing what is right for the organisation over the longer term. Many financial institutions talk about taking a long term approach, but very few truly live by it. At ADIA, this anchors everything we do, starting with who we recruit, down to how we manage and reward employees for performance.

As well as some of my regular tasks, in any one day I might be working with a department on reviewing the compensation structure for a

particular asset class, providing input into organisational development initiatives or working with a cross-departmental group on productivity. One of the things I enjoy the most about my day-to-day work is that I have the chance to interact with fascinating stakeholder groups, people from all over the world with different cultures, backgrounds and expertise in different business areas.

We have a culture of debating ideas here, and with the different perspectives we have around the table those conversations are often lively, but always respectful and always open to hearing a different view. I think this leads to better, more robust decision making for the organisation as a whole, because not only do we draw on the expertise of a number of people during these discussions, but we also spend time building support for how the decision will be implemented.

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**Veenu Ramchandani**  
**Senior Investment Manager,**  
**External Equities Department**  
I joined ADIA's External Equities Department in 2016 as one of the people responsible for managing ADIA's equity investments being managed by external fund managers.

Previously I was working with a global asset manager based in London, firstly as a research analyst, then a product specialist and finally I moved into manager selection.

During the recruitment process for ADIA, I was able to meet with a number of members of my future team, and that gave me a good level of comfort around the type of people I'd be working with, and the type of organisation I was joining.

One of the things that I noticed immediately after joining ADIA was the level of access we have to some of the world's very best investors. ADIA has built long-standing and deep relationships over the years, so when we need to speak to a manager we get access to timely insights from the senior team. It is one of the parts of the job that I enjoy the most; I'm able to have fascinating conversations about all manner of things that influence financial markets, with some of the very best minds in the business.

Working in External Equities means I spend my day either monitoring our existing external fund managers, or researching those we might consider in the future. It requires a mix of both quantitative and qualitative skills, so while the ability to track managers' performance, risk metrics and other measures is vital, so is spending the time to understand their investment philosophies and process. We get to

know the people behind the decisions, and this often means meeting with the senior team as well as the junior analysts, to ensure we have a full picture.

I work in the EMEA team, which is six in total. We have a mix of nationalities, with three men and three women, and experience ranging from around ten years to more than 20. It's a diverse team and an enjoyable environment to work in.

Whenever we're proposing to make changes to existing manager allocations, we present to the rest of the department and the idea is challenged by other members of the team to ensure we're considering all angles. It is a great way to draw on the collective experience and knowledge we have. We are all encouraged to bring new ideas and approaches to how we work and, if the team sees value in them, they're adopted quickly. There's certainly no resistance to trying new ways to do things.