

David Sobey Retailing Centre

Category Management Program

January 26 - March 16, 2027
Online Program



Sobey School of Business
Saint Mary's University

About

This Certificate Program is designed for Category Managers who want to master the latest best practices in an era defined by expansive data, artificial intelligence, customer centricity, and curated assortments. Over eight engaging sessions, participants gain practical strategies and expert insights to elevate their category management capabilities.

The David Sobey Retailing Centre is part of the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University. It is a unique, retail-focused centre that concentrates on research, innovation and education to support the Canadian retail sector. Learn more about the centre at www.davidsobeycentre.ca.

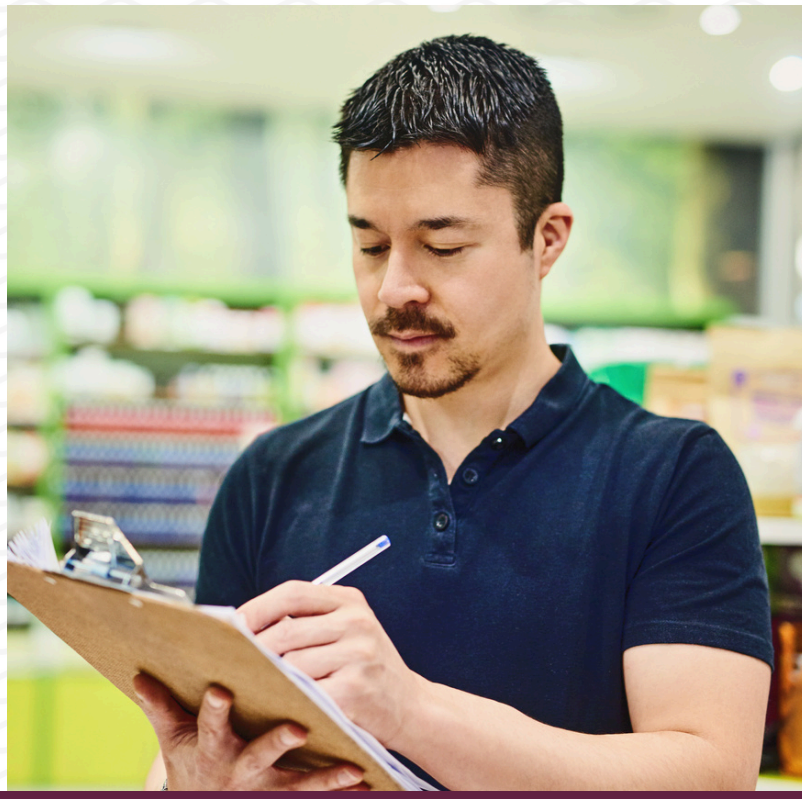
Trusted by Industry Leaders

Leading retailers that have trusted this program to develop their Category Management talent.

Course Skill Development

When you successfully complete this course you will be able to:

1. Create a fully integrated Category Management practice that will deliver better overall results for your category.
2. Become more disciplined in your approach to Category Management.
3. Learn what data provides the best insights to help drive improved decision making.
4. Learn how to drive success through well designed merchandising activities.
5. Optimize assortment planning and management.
6. Take a more "customer-centric" approach to manage your category.



Help your Category Managers deliver more dollars to your bottom line

Program Outline

Session 1: Introduction to Category Management

Tuesday, January 26: 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. EST

Summary: This session introduces the core principles of Category Management and its role in driving overall business success. It examines how category strategies align with the retailer's broader business objectives and explores the rapid evolution of Category Management in response to fragmented customer journeys, multiple purchasing channels, AI advancements, expanded data access, and the growing demand for curated assortments.

Session 2: Consumer Behaviour and Consumer Insights

Tuesday, February 2: 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. EST

Summary: As consumers take greater control of the brand experience, Category Managers must become more agile, data-driven, and strategic in their assortment decisions. This session examines how technology—and particularly artificial intelligence—is transforming the customer journey and influencing purchasing behaviour. It highlights how Category Managers can leverage these insights to drive stronger results and create greater success in their categories.

Session 3: Banner Positioning, Category Roles, Product Prioritization and Pricing Strategy

Tuesday, February 9: 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. EST

Summary: Creating alignment between customer expectations and a banner's market positioning is the foundation for achieving strong results. Building on this, effective execution of category roles, product prioritization, and pricing strategy ensures a cohesive customer experience with every visit. This session focuses on establishing that foundation, enabling participants to effectively leverage the tools and insights presented in later sessions.

Session 4: Assortment Planning and Management

Tuesday, February 16: 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. EST

Summary: Getting category assortment right is critical to maximizing sales and profitability. Yet with vast amounts of data, complex product attributes, and ongoing supply chain and geopolitical challenges, assortment planning can be daunting. This session demonstrates how data, AI, and other insights can be leveraged to identify the optimal assortment for your category.

Session 5: Flyer and Promotions

Tuesday, February 23: 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. EST

Summary: Flyers and Promotions used to be the main way to drive customer traffic and sales growth. Now it is only the beginning. With social media, personalized offers and retail media networks, enticing customers to make more purchases is becoming more of a science. In this session we'll have fun learning the best ways to take care of your category goals while also helping out the overall business.

Session 6: Merchandising Planning & Analysis.

Tuesday, March 2: 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. EST

Summary: Research consistently shows that physical stores remain the primary channel for customer purchases—making effective merchandise planning more important than ever. This session demonstrates how analytical models powered by diverse data sources can help maximize results and drive stronger in-store performance.

Session 7: Leveraging Supplier Partnerships

Tuesday, March 9: 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. EST

Summary: As retail becomes more complex and data driven, the relationship with suppliers is changing too. From complete transparency to co-developing category strategies, there are significant benefits to engaging with your supplier community. Delegating responsibility enables you to be more effective and cover more ground. We'll explore all things supplier including having a merchandising senior leader guest speaker in this engaging session.

Session 8: Category Analysis, Reviews and Strategies

Tuesday, March 16: 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. EST

Summary: In our final session we will bring it all together by taking you through a Category Review process, including a thorough Category Analysis. Our experts will show you how to assemble the right data together in a way that can offer great insights that lead to positive action. This all leads to developing great strategies for your categories both short and long term.

Facilitated by industry experts with invaluable retail experience

Instructors



Mark Yates

With a career spanning more than 20 years, Mark is a seasoned professional specializing in developing actionable analytics models. These principles facilitate evidence-based decision making for a strategic and disciplined approach to planning and execution. He empowers organizations to better operate their business by evaluating operating models to assess where opportunities or deficiencies may lay. Mark relies on extensive experience applying statistical methodologies to implement problem-solving solutions through a tactical approach to better satisfy consumer requirements or shifting market landscapes. His experience has been predicated upon various industries with a focus on retail environments. Mark is passionate about using his expertise to educate others on the potential opportunities found when exploring data. He is also the owner of an independent data analytics consultancy.



Mark Innes

Mark Innes is a SMU MBA graduate with over 30 years as a retail leader in world class food, drug and mass organizations such as Loblaws, Empire, Target and Pharmasave. His retail journey has enabled him to gain senior leadership experience in marketing, merchandising and operations, and he has applied his skills, helping organizations successfully adapt, change and grow in their respective segment. Through it all Mark has always maintained his thirst for learning which makes him a great fit in his current role as Chief Retail Engagement Officer. Mark is passionate about helping the David Sobey Retailing Centre grow its presence to become one of the leading retail universities in Canada by creating opportunities for student and faculty to work directly with retailers on pivotal projects.



Dr. Ramesh Venkat

Dr. Ramesh Venkat is the Director of the David Sobey Retailing Centre and an Associate Professor of Marketing. He was formerly Associate Dean of Masters Programs and Director of the Sobey MBA Program. He has published over 50 articles and reports on topics such as online marketing, customer engagement, customer satisfaction, customer experience and brand strategy. Ramesh is the author book on online marketing. He has co-authored chapters in several marketing books. He is working on a forthcoming book on brand strategy in a digital marketplace. Through his company CeQuotia, Ramesh offers customer experience measurement and retail analytics solutions

Dr. Ramesh Venkat teaching in a David Sobey Retailing Centre executive education program

Certification

Participants will be awarded an official certificate in Category Management upon completion of all eight sessions and a final exam passing grade of at least 80%. Participants will be given 1.5 hours to complete the online, multiple-choice exam.

Registration

Investment:
$3,450 per participant

Discounts
Discounts available if registering 3 or more participants

To Register/For More Info
Please email
davidsobeycentre@smu.ca



Sobey School of Business

Saint Mary's University

davidsobeycentre.ca