
How the Petrochemical Sector Works: Feedstock, Capacity, Trade and Sustainability Training Course

2 – 6 August 2027
Cape town





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Programme Summary

How the petrochemical sector works is the subject of this one-week training course for senior managers and executives from outside the sector, ending in an industry outlook brief for their own organisation. Many board members and functional heads must approve contracts, investments and partnerships in petrochemicals without a shared picture of what drives the sector. The programme moves from the structure of the chain to diagnosis of feedstock and cycle effects, then to analysis of trade, investment and sustainability choices, and then to application. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on how the petrochemical sector works for executives from mixed organisations.

The Business Case

Petrochemicals supply plastics, fibres, coatings and many inputs to other industries, so their prices and availability reach well beyond producers. Executives who cannot read feedstock cost, new capacity and trade shifts tend to react late to price swings or to back projects at the wrong point in the cycle. A common framework lets finance, strategy, procurement and operations leaders hold one conversation about risk, timing and exposure.

- Decision Timing: Improves as capacity and demand signals are read before commitments are made.
- Exposure Awareness: Strengthens as feedstock, trade and policy risks are mapped for each product family.
- Board Briefing Quality: Rises as outlook views rest on a stated set of drivers.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Value chain analysis applied to the petrochemical sector: It frames the sector map and margin logic built in Sessions 1 and 2.
- Supply and demand balance and cycle analysis from commodity market reporting: It supports the diagnosis of capacity and price swings in Session 2.
- Investment appraisal based on the time value of money: It guides the project comparison and risk screening in Session 4.

Intended Participants

- Directors who approve investments, partnerships and long-term supply arrangements.
- Strategy and corporate development leaders who assess entry, expansion or exit.
- Procurement and supply leaders who buy petrochemical products or feedstocks.
- Finance and risk leaders who test project cases and price exposure.



Typical participants come from energy, banking and project finance, manufacturing, packaging and public investment bodies.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to construct a map of the petrochemical chain from feedstock to end use.
2. Participants will be able to diagnose how feedstock cost and capacity additions move margins and prices.
3. Participants will be able to evaluate trade flows and regional positions for a product family.
4. Participants will be able to prioritise investment options by return, timing and risk.
5. Participants will be able to assess product regulation and sustainability pressure on a business model.
6. Participants will be able to justify an industry outlook brief to board colleagues.

Programme Structure

Day 1: How the Petrochemical Sector Works from Feedstock to End Use

What does the chain look like, and who earns what along it?

- Feedstock to Product Family Tree
- Building Block and Derivative Chart
- End-Use Demand Segment Map
- Producer Types and Roles Table
- Chain Margin Share Illustration

Day 2: Diagnosing Feedstock Economics and Capacity Cycles

Why do margins and prices swing, and what signals them early?

- Feedstock Cost Position Comparison
- Capacity Addition and Closure Timeline
- Operating Rate and Price Relationship Chart
- Cycle Stage Reading Guide
- Early Warning Indicator Panel

Day 3: Analysing Trade Flows and Regional Positions

Where is product made, where is it used and what moves between regions?

- Regional Surplus and Deficit Table
- Trade Route and Logistics Cost Map
- Import Dependence Exposure Sheet
- Trade Measure and Tariff Scenario Grid
- Competitive Position Summary Sheet



Day 4: Investment Decisions, Regulation and Sustainability

How should investment, product rules and environmental pressure shape strategic choices?

- Project Return and Payback Comparison
- Capacity Timing Decision Tree
- Product Regulation and Restriction Watchlist
- Recycling and Low-Carbon Route Overview
- Partnership and Joint Venture Options Grid

Day 5: Applying the Petrochemical Industry View to One Organisation

Is the outlook brief ready to take to the board?

- Placing the Organisation on the Session 1 Chain Map
- Testing Session 2 Cycle Signals on Recent Data
- Positioning Session 3 Trade Findings
- Screening Session 4 Investment Options
- Completing the Industry Outlook Brief

Methodology

The programme uses a data workshop method built on anonymised price series, capacity lists and trade tables from olefin, polymer and aromatics chains. Participants read the data in small groups, state a view on direction and defend it to peers who act as board members and lenders. Facilitator feedback is given on every work product before it enters the final brief.

- Suggested activity: Tracing one feedstock through three derivatives to a consumer product and marking where cost enters.
- Suggested activity: Reading a capacity and operating rate chart and stating the likely direction of margins.
- Suggested activity: Comparing two investment options under a low and a high price case.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes an industry outlook brief for their own organisation. It holds a chain position map, a driver and signal panel, a trade and regional view, an investment and risk comparison and a statement of sustainability pressure. The brief is used at work to open board discussion, shape procurement or investment choices and set the signals to watch.



Frequently Asked Questions

Is the study of how the petrochemical sector works suitable for executives with no chemical background?

Yes. How the petrochemical sector works is taught at a strategic level and assumes responsibility for decisions touching petrochemicals, not engineering or chemistry knowledge.

Which tools does how the petrochemical sector works rest on in this programme?

How the petrochemical sector works is taught through value chain analysis, supply and demand balance and cycle analysis from commodity reporting, and investment appraisal based on the time value of money.

How is the outlook brief from how the petrochemical sector works used at work?

You use the industry outlook brief to open board discussions, frame procurement and investment choices and agree which market signals the organisation will watch.

How does how the petrochemical sector works differ from a programme on petrochemical sales and marketing?

How the petrochemical sector works centres on industry economics, cycles and trade, while petrochemical sales and marketing centres on customers, pricing and contracts for a seller.