

9 May 2024

Financial Services | Banks

United Overseas Bank (UOB SP)

Neutral (Maintained)

A Very Decent Start To The Year

Target Price (Return):	SGD30.10 (0.7%)
Price (Market Cap):	SGD29.90 (USD36,890m)
ESG score:	3.2 (out of 4)
Avg Daily Turnover (SGD/USD)	96.0m/71.2m

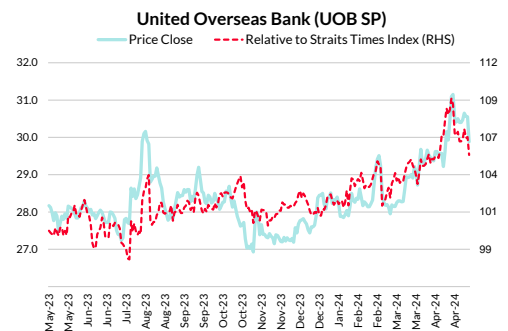
- **Stay NEUTRAL, new SGD30.10 TP from SGD29 (1% upside).** 1Q24 results were in line. Given the shift in rate expectations and efforts to manage funding costs, United Overseas Bank was slightly more optimistic on the near-term outlook for NIM. However, its preference to retain capital for growth may dampen hopes for an improved dividend payout. While valuation appears decent, we note that it lags peers on asset quality metrics, leading to higher earnings risks if economic conditions pan out worse than expected.
- **1Q24 results in line.** Reported net profit of SGD1.5bn (+6% QoQ, -2% YoY) made up 25% of our and consensus' FY24F. Annualised ROE was 12.7% (FY23: 12.5%) while CET-1 improved 50bps QoQ to 13.9%. Relative to our FY24F, 1Q operating income and opex made up c.25% of our full-year forecast, while loan provisions came in at 20%.
- **Results highlights.** 1Q24 operating income was flat YoY (+3% QoQ) with stronger non-II (+4% YoY, +15% QoQ) offset by lower NII (-2% YoY and QoQ). Fees rose 5% YoY (+2% QoQ) while other non-II was up 3% YoY (+33% QoQ), but NIM slipped 12bps YoY (flat QoQ). Opex was tightly controlled (+3% YoY; -2% QoQ) with CIR at 44.6% vs 43.3% in 1Q23 (4Q23: 46.8%), while credit cost ticked slightly lower to 23bps (1Q23: 24bps; 4Q23: 25bps) on lower NPL formation. Loans rose 2% YoY (flat QoQ) with North Asia and Rest of the World driving YoY growth. UOB remains selective in growing quality credits while short-term trade loans picked up. Deposit growth (+4% YoY, +1% QoQ) outpaced that of loans, with CASA rising 10% YoY (+4% QoQ), which UOB attributed to retail CASA and continued wholesale CASA traction thanks to its cash management platform.
- **Optimistic on NIM and fee income outlook, at least in the near term.** UOB maintained its 2024 guidance (Figure 2), but was more optimistic on the NII outlook thanks to the higher-for-longer rate environment and deposit cost management. 1Q24 exit NIM was 1-2bps above the 2.02% 1Q average, and management believes efforts to cut deposit rates will be felt over the next two quarters. Hence, near-term NIM should be stable to slightly higher vs 1Q24. As for fees, improving investor confidence should buoy wealth management activities while card spending is expected to stay strong this year. That said, the strong 1Q treasury and investments income could moderate ahead.
- **NPL ratio stable at 1.5%.** Non-performing assets coverage was 95% (1Q23: 90%; 4Q23: 94%). Asset quality seems to be under control, and management thinks its focused segment (mid- to higher-end) will stay relatively resilient.
- **Capital management.** Despite an improving CET-1 ratio, UOB prefers to retain capital for growth opportunities and believes a 50% payout is a good balance. This will likely be in place during its mid-term plan until 2026.
- **Earnings retained, TP rises to SGD30.10** on lower equity risk premium (ERP), in line with recent revisions for peers. Our TP includes a 2% ESG premium.

Analyst

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Share Performance (%)

	YTD	1m	3m	6m	12m
Absolute	5.0	1.7	5.9	9.1	5.2
Relative	4.3	0.2	2.0	4.8	5.0
52-wk Price low/high (SGD)				26.9	-31.2



Source: Bloomberg

Overall ESG Score: 3.2 (out of 4)

E: GOOD

In 2023, UOB purchased and retired 20.5k carbon offsets to address its Scope 1, residual Scope 2 and Scope 3 (business air travel) emissions. It has made a net zero commitment for six sectors by 2050 while aiming to build a sustainable finance portfolio of SGD30bn by 2025 (2023: SGD44.5bn). Meanwhile, about SGD10bn in total assets under management were in ESG-focused investments.

S: EXCELLENT

UOB embraces gender diversity, with women accounting for 62% of permanent staff at end-2023 – 38% in senior management roles. It launched TMRW, ASEAN's first mobile-only digital bank, to improve financial inclusion in Thailand and Indonesia.

G: EXCELLENT

UOB has a comprehensive framework of policies, processes, methodologies and tools for effective risk management. There is a much publicised ongoing money laundering case in Singapore, where UOB is one of several banks mentioned in relation to the case.

Forecasts and Valuation	Dec-22	Dec-23	Dec-24F	Dec-25F	Dec-26F
Reported net profit (SGDm)	4,573	5,711	5,876	6,089	6,266
Net profit growth (%)	12.2	24.9	2.9	3.6	2.9
Recurring net profit (SGDm)	4,819	6,061	6,045	6,089	6,266
Recurring EPS (SGD)	2.88	3.62	3.61	3.64	3.75
BVPS (SGD)	25.86	27.64	29.43	31.24	33.16
DPS (SGD)	1.35	1.71	1.76	1.81	1.86
Recurring P/E (x)	10.38	8.26	8.27	8.21	7.97
P/B (x)	1.16	1.08	1.02	0.96	0.90
Dividend Yield (%)	4.5	5.7	5.9	6.1	6.2
Return on average equity (%)	10.6	12.7	12.3	12.0	11.6

Source: Company data, RHB

Financial Exhibits

Asia	Financial summary (SGD)	Dec-22	Dec-23	Dec-24F	Dec-25F	Dec-26F
Singapore	EPS	2.73	3.41	3.51	3.64	3.75
Financial Services	Recurring EPS	2.88	3.62	3.61	3.64	3.75
United Overseas Bank	DPS	1.35	1.71	1.76	1.81	1.86
UOB SP	BVPS	25.86	27.64	29.43	31.24	33.16
Neutral						
	Valuation metrics	Dec-22	Dec-23	Dec-24F	Dec-25F	Dec-26F
Valuation basis	Recurring P/E (x)	10.38	8.26	8.27	8.21	7.97
GGM-derived intrinsic value with an ESG overlay. Key GGM assumptions are:	P/B (x)	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.0	0.9
i. COE of 12.1%;	Dividend Yield (%)	4.5	5.7	5.9	6.1	6.2
ii. ROE of 12.5%; and						
iii. 3.0% long-term growth						
	Income statement (SGDm)	Dec-22	Dec-23	Dec-24F	Dec-25F	Dec-26F
Key drivers	Interest income	12,862	22,242	22,457	22,324	22,211
Our net profit forecasts is most sensitive to changes in:	Interest expense	(4,519)	(12,563)	(12,719)	(12,389)	(12,110)
i. Impairment charges	Net interest income	8,343	9,679	9,738	9,936	10,100
ii. NIM	Non interest income	3,232	4,253	4,428	4,722	5,054
iii. Non-II growth	Total operating income	11,575	13,932	14,166	14,658	15,155
	Overheads	(4,971)	(5,797)	(5,987)	(6,431)	(6,678)
	Pre-provision operating profit	6,604	8,135	8,179	8,226	8,477
Key risks	Loan impairment allowances	(628)	(783)	(800)	(850)	(850)
Key risks include:	Other impairment allowances	22	(162)	(45)	(41)	(40)
i. Weaker-than-expected NIM	Income from associates	97	93	100	110	120
ii. Sharper-than-expected deterioration in asset quality	Other exceptional items	(310)	(420)	(208)	-	-
iii. Challenges related to integration of Citi's consumer assets	Pre-tax profit	5,785	6,863	7,226	7,445	7,707
	Taxation	(1,202)	(1,138)	(1,337)	(1,340)	(1,426)
	Minority interests	(10)	(14)	(14)	(16)	(15)
	Reported net profit	4,573	5,711	5,876	6,089	6,266
	Recurring net profit	4,819	6,061	6,045	6,089	6,266
Company Profile						
UOB is the third largest Singapore bank by asset size. It also has significant operations in Malaysia, Thailand & Indonesia.						
	Profitability ratios	Dec-22	Dec-23	Dec-24F	Dec-25F	Dec-26F
	Return on average assets (%)	0.9	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
	Return on average equity (%)	10.6	12.7	12.3	12.0	11.6
	Return on IEAs (%)	3.0	5.0	4.9	4.7	4.5
	Cost of funds (%)	1.1	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.4
	Net interest spread (%)	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.1
	Net interest margin (%)	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1
	Non-interest income / total income (%)	27.9	30.5	31.3	32.2	33.4
	Cost to income ratio (%)	42.9	41.6	42.3	43.9	44.1
	Credit cost (bps)	19.9	24.4	24.5	25.1	24.0
	Balance sheet (SGDm)	Dec-22	Dec-23	Dec-24F	Dec-25F	Dec-26F
	Total gross loans	319,663	321,150	330,785	347,324	361,217
	Other interest earning assets	116,707	125,723	130,670	135,313	139,868
	Total gross IEAs	436,370	446,873	461,455	482,637	501,084
	Total provisions	(4,308)	(4,145)	(4,317)	(4,469)	(4,546)
	Net loans to customers	315,355	317,005	326,468	342,855	356,671
	Total net IEAs	432,062	442,728	457,138	478,168	496,538
	Total non-IEAs	72,198	80,792	83,790	89,271	98,390
	Total assets	504,260	523,520	540,928	567,439	594,928
	Customer deposits	368,553	385,469	397,033	416,885	437,729
	Other interest-bearing liabilities	65,918	69,551	71,293	73,747	75,952
	Total IBLs	434,471	455,020	468,326	490,632	513,681
	Total non-IBLs	26,183	22,032	23,134	24,290	25,505
	Total liabilities	460,654	477,052	491,459	514,922	539,186
	Share capital	7,855	7,752	7,752	7,752	7,752
	Shareholders' equity	43,366	46,226	49,212	52,245	55,456
	Minority interests	240	242	256	272	287
	Asset quality and capital	Dec-22	Dec-23	Dec-24F	Dec-25F	Dec-26F
	Reported NPLs / gross cust loans (%)	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
	Total provisions / reported NPLs (%)	85.1	85.1	87.0	87.2	86.8
	CET-1 ratio (%)	14.4	14.4	15.0	15.1	15.3
	Tier-1 ratio (%)	14.4	14.4	15.0	15.1	15.3
	Total capital ratio (%)	16.7	16.6	17.0	17.1	17.2

Source: Company data, RHB

Results At a Glance

Figure 1: UOB - summary of 1Q24 results

FYE Dec (SGDm)	1Q23	4Q23	1Q24	QoQ (%)	YoY (%)	Comments: 1Q23 vs 1Q24
NII	2,409	2,404	2,362	-2	-2	
<i>NIM (%) - reported</i>	2.14%	2.02%	2.02%	0bps	-12bps	
Non-II	1,115	1,006	1,161	15	4	Led by other non-II with customer-related treasury income up 8% YoY (+19% QoQ) from increased retail bond sales and hedging activities while other trading and investment income rose 11% YoY (+70% QoQ) from trading and liquidity management activities. Fees were up 5% YoY (+2% QoQ), which was broad-based.
Net fee & commission income	552	569	580	2	5	
Other non-II	563	437	581	33	3	
<i>Non-II/total income (%)</i>	31.6%	29.5%	33.0%			
Operating income	3,524	3,410	3,523	3	-0	
Overhead expenses	-1,526	-1,596	-1,571	-2	3	Under control with core expenses up 2% YoY (flat QoQ). Core CIR of 41.9% vs 1Q23: 40.9%; 4Q23: 43.2%
<i>CIR (%)</i>	43.3%	46.8%	44.6%			
PIOP	1,998	1,814	1,952	8	-2	
Impairments charges	-174	-159	-170	7	-2	Specific allowance down 4% YoY while general allowance was flat.
<i>Credit cost (bps)</i>	24	25	23			
Operating profit	1,824	1,655	1,782	8	-2	
Associates	25	22	26			
Pre-tax profit	1,849	1,677	1,808	8	-2	
Net Profit	1,511	1,404	1,487	6	-2	1Q24 PATMI at 25% of our and consensus' FY24 estimates
Core net profit	1,578	1,498	1,566	5	-1	Ex-one off integration expenses relating to Citi acquisition
Other key data and ratios						
Gross loans	315,999	321,150	322,634	0	2	Greater China and Rest of the World regions led growth while Singapore book was up 1% YoY (-1% QoQ) while ASEAN-4 was flat YoY (-1% QoQ). +3% YoY/+1% QoQ on constant currency basis.
Customer deposits	374,121	385,469	388,472	1	4	Underpinned by growth from Singapore (+5% YoY, +1% QoQ). CASA ratio grew further to 50.6% from 48.9% at end-Dec 2023 (Mar 2023: 47.9%)
Non-performing loans	5,056	4,870	4,840	-1	-4	
Total assets	501,909	523,520	515,340	-2	3	
Shareholders' funds	45,961	46,226	47,482	3	3	
ROAA (%)	1.20	1.08	1.15			
ROAE (%)	13.5	12.3	12.7			Core ROE of 14% (FY23: 14.2%)
LDR (%)	83.3	82.2	83.3			
NPL ratio	1.6	1.5	1.5			
NPL coverage	90.0	94.4	95.3			
CET-1 ratio (%)	14.0	13.3	13.9			
Total capital ratio (%)	17.7	16.7	16.7			

Source: Company data, RHB

Figure 2: UOB – management guidance and financial targets

	FY23 achieved	1Q24 achieved	2024 outlook	Comments
Loan growth	Flat YoY (+2% YoY constant currency)	2% YoY (+3% YoY on constant currency)	Low single digit	To continue focusing on high-quality customers.
NIM	2.09%	2.02%	c. 2%	UOB was more confident of comfortably keeping 2024 NIM above the 2% mark amid a higher-for-longer rate environment and efforts to lower deposit cost. These would be positive for near-term NIM.
Fee income growth	4%	+5% YoY	Double-digit fee growth	Still positive on the outlook for wealth and card fees, and expects momentum to improve in the coming quarters.
CIR	44.6% Core: 41.5%	44.6% Core: 41.9%	Core CIR of 41-42%	One-time Citi acquisition costs are expected to substantially drop in 2H24 given that the Citi Thailand operations recently completed Operating Day One.
Credit cost	25bps	23bps	25-30bps	Continues to believe credit cost will end up at the lower end of the range.

Source: Company data, RHB

Valuation and TP

In line with the recent downward revisions to our COE assumptions for peers DBS (DBS SP, BUY, TP: SGD38.90) and OCBC (OCBC SP, NEUTRAL, TP: SGD13.90), we have also lowered our COE assumption for UOB by 35bps. We note that Singapore banks have attempted to provide a longer-term ROE outlook, and as visibility improves – with respect to a normalised US Federal Funds Rate (FFR) level – and confidence surrounding the ROE guidance provided rises, we see room for the ERP to ease. In the near term, the higher-for-longer rate environment, continued strength in fees, benign NPL environment, and attractive dividends should help support valuations, in our view.

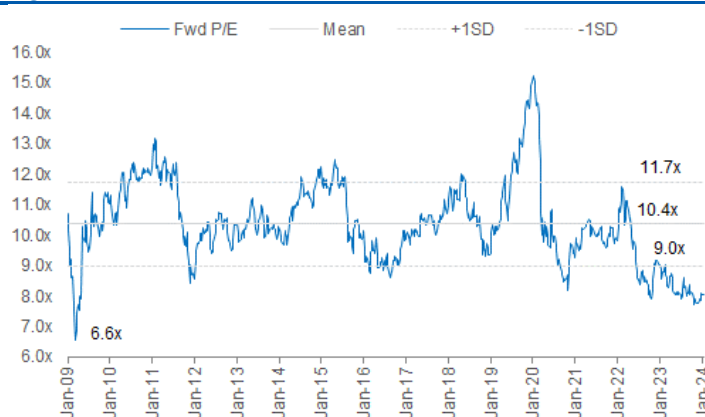
Following the above, we obtained a revised fair GGM-derived P/BV of 1.04x (from 1.0x) and a higher intrinsic value of SGD29.55 (from SGD28.39). There is, however, no change to the 2% ESG premium applied to our intrinsic value. All in, our TP has been revised up to SGD30.10 from SGD29.

Figure 3: UOB – GGM valuation with ESG overlay

Cost of equity (COE) computation:		Sustainable ROE (%)	12.5
Risk free rate (%)	3.0	COE (%)	12.1
Equity premium (%)	8.3	Long-term growth (g)	3.0
Beta (x)	1.1	Implied P/BV (x)	1.04
Cost of equity - CAPM (%)	12.1	BVPS – FY24F	SGD28.40
		Intrinsic value	SGD29.55
ESG premium/(discount) (%)	2.0	ESG premium/(discount)	SGD0.59
		TP (rounded)	SGD30.10

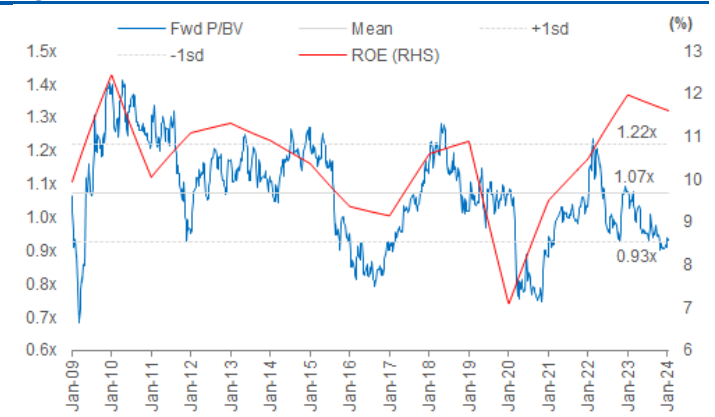
Source: Company data, RHB

Figure 4: UOB’s 12-month forward consensus P/E



Source: Bloomberg, RHB

Figure 5: UOB’s 12-month forward consensus P/BV



Source: Bloomberg, RHB

Emissions And ESG

Trend analysis

In 2023, UOB purchased and redeemed a total of 135k GWh in Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) to address its electricity consumption in all key markets. UOB also purchased and retired 20.5k carbon offsets to address its Scope 1, residual Scope 2 and Scope 3 (business air travel) emissions.

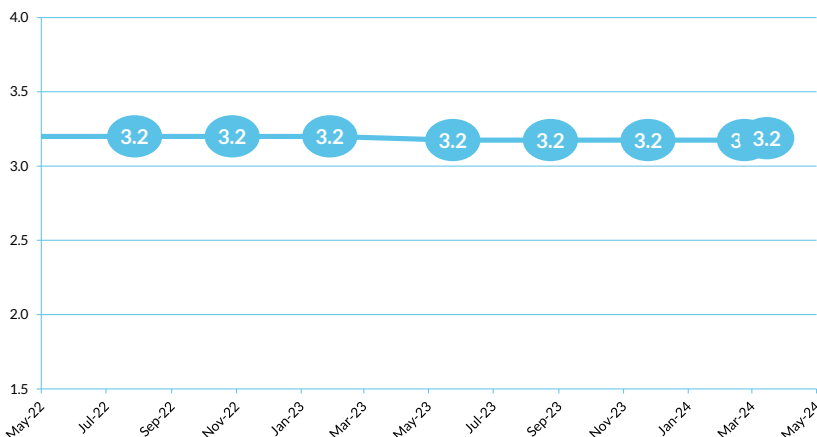
Emissions (tCO2e)	Dec-21	Dec-22	Dec-23
Scope 1	4,300	5,800	4,800
Scope 2	1,000	1,100	1,600
Scope 3	600	4,000	14,100
Total emissions	5,900	10,900	20,500

Source: Company data, RHB

Latest ESG-Related Developments

- **UOB Transition Finance Framework:** This was launched in 2022 to help companies in carbon-intensive sectors with their net-zero transition plans.
- **Sustainable targets:** Sustainable finance portfolio of SGD30bn by 2025 and net zero for six sectors (currently 60% of corporate lending portfolio) by 2050.
- **Signatory to the Equator Principles (EP):** EP requirements are integrated into UOB Group's Responsible Financing Policy.

ESG Rating History



Source: RHB

Recommendation Chart



Source: RHB, Bloomberg

Date	Recommendation	Target Price	Price
2024-03-21	Neutral	29.0	29.2
2024-02-22	Neutral	29.0	28.5
2024-01-21	Neutral	29.1	27.9
2023-10-26	Neutral	29.7	27.3
2023-09-17	Neutral	31.7	29.2
2023-07-27	Buy	31.7	28.9
2023-05-30	Buy	32.3	28.1
2023-02-23	Buy	34.9	29.6
2022-12-16	Buy	34.9	30.7
2022-10-30	Buy	31.4	27.1
2022-07-31	Neutral	29.3	27.6
2022-05-03	Neutral	32.7	30.0
2022-02-16	Buy	38.1	32.8
2021-11-04	Buy	33.5	27.2
2021-08-05	Buy	30.2	26.5

Source: RHB, Bloomberg

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