



PROFESSIONAL Education

THE ANNUAL POSTGRADUATE GUIDE • DECEMBER 2016

DRIVING DIGITAL CHANGE

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BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Shaking up business



Photo: Nora Tam

The EMBA and DBA offer the tools for real change, writes Chris Davis

Designed to broaden and enrich knowledge and leadership skills, top-tier Executive MBA programmes equip participants with the professional development and strategic perspectives necessary to face 21st-century business challenges.

Because no two business problems are ever the same, the Chicago Booth Executive MBA programme provides students with a thorough set of core disciplines which underlie business decision-making, says

Richard Johnson, Chicago Booth School of Business associate dean, Executive MBA Program - Europe and Asia. Core disciplines include economics, psychology, sociology, statistics and accounting. "We teach students a set of frameworks to apply those disciplines to each and every new business challenge or question they are faced with," says Johnson. "This highly analytical, data-based approach to business means that, as managers, our students come up with stronger solutions that can be backed up," he adds, explaining that this is extremely important in a tricky, demanding business

world. Johnson believes students and alumni are more confident because they can stand by their solutions and their decisions, which they have reached not through gut feeling or "off the shelf" solutions, but through a disciplined approach to looking at a problem critically, deeply, and from all angles. "This approach allows students to have an almost immediate impact on their work and on their companies, and this impact grows throughout the programme and beyond, once they become alumni," notes Johnson.

Established in 1943, and considered the

“Having your ideas and thoughts challenged by others with very different ideas and experience serves to make your own ideas that much better

- Richard Johnson

world's first Executive MBA programme, the Chicago Booth EMBA is designed for mid- and senior-level executives looking to advance or make a change in their career, and who wish to expand their knowledge and skills through a formal business education. Students remain in full-time work, and take the programme in 16 intense, one-week sessions over a 21-month period. Johnson says the week-long module format is powerful because it allows students the opportunity for in-depth study, group work and networking. “There are also fewer distractions,” he points out.

To ensure academic rigour and high-quality learning experiences, the programme offered on the Asia campus has exactly the same curriculum, taught by the same faculty members, as the one offered on the Chicago and London campuses. Graduates are awarded the same degree. The preparation it gives students and alumni for working in a global business environment is another highlight. “Companies need people who are practised and skilled at working with people from a wide range of cultures,” Johnson notes. To address this issue, Chicago Booth students spend a third of class time with mixed groups from the three campuses. This results in participants from more than 50 countries, and a wide range of industries, coming together. “Having your ideas and thoughts challenged by others with very different ideas and experience serves to make your own ideas that much better,” says Johnson. He also notes that, early in

the programme students tend to expand their network to include a global group of business partners, advisors, potential clients, colleagues, and lifelong friends. In spite of the proliferation of web-based courses on just about any management topic, Johnson firmly believes they are not a good replacement for the learning experience in the classroom. He says there are ways in which learning can be enhanced by technology. For example, the programme's director of academic support provides web-based tutorial sessions for students to review the materials they have covered and help them prepare for upcoming exams. Once they have finished a session, students can download a recording and watch it again, or download the written materials from the session. They also have free access to online collaboration tools, in order to “meet” classmates for group work or review sessions on their own.

Renowned internationally for its rigorous academic approach and emphasis on high-quality research, the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) offered by the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) College of Business is designed for senior executives who want to make a difference in the way management and professional practice are conducted by developing their own ideas and interests. The programme is now in its 10th year, and a growing number of graduates have had their research findings presented at conferences and published in prominent academic journals. “We stress from the outset that the most important

thing is that the research conducted by our students makes a genuine contribution, with practical and societal impacts,” says CityU DBA director, Professor Muammer Ozer.

By ensuring the student mix includes experienced executives from different industries and nationalities, Ozer says, research can be focused on the most interesting and relevant management and business challenges. However, because students tend to have the mindset of business executives, the first 12-to-18-month phase of the four-year programme concentrates on developing the research skills and methodologies needed to apply theoretical understanding through independent research. Ozer says that a fundamental strength of the programme is the networking between learning partners



Richard Johnson

城大商學院
College of Business

“Our faculty have cutting-edge knowledge, in-depth understanding, and expertise in global industries and business

- Muammer Ozer

“We are especially proud of the fact that many of our students subscribe to one of the programme’s core values which is social contribution

- Andrew Chan



and faculty. “Our faculty have cutting-edge knowledge, in-depth understanding, and expertise in global industries and business,” he adds. The close relationship between faculty and students plays an important part in helping the latter define their research topic. For example, instead of looking at innovation as a broad concept, the topic could be refined to explore the impact of innovation on leadership, employee motivation, or what facilitates innovation in a specific business sector. Interaction between students also ensures a valuable exchange of problem solving ideas and different perspectives. Classes are structured to accommodate executives’ demanding work commitments, running for three consecutive days, one weekend a month.

With a unique focus on combining tradition with modernity, says Professor Andrew Chan, director of the Executive MBA at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) Business School, the emphasis is on ensuring the programme is interactive, dynamic, and pays close attention to the changing business world. “To equip students with the most updated knowledge, we offer a multi-dimensional learning environment,” Chan says. Senior executives and entrepreneurs join the programme because they are looking for an enriching experience that provides them with new knowledge, perspectives and experiences, which they can apply to their businesses and the wider world. “Their motivation for joining the programme is not merely increasing their salary,” Chan stresses. “We are especially proud of the fact

that many of our students subscribe to one of the programme’s core values, which is social contribution,” he says. “These are students seeking ways to contribute to society, because it is in keeping with their values.”

The programme offers examples of graduates who have put what they learned into practice by leading their companies to successful public listings. There are also examples of alumni deciding they need a career change and moving into a business they had previously never thought of. Some career changes have been dramatic. For instance, Castillo Figueroa Arnaldo, from the class of 2013, was managing director of a trading firm while studying for his EMBA. After graduation, however, he returned to his native Honduras, and, early this year, became minister of economic development. In the same class, following graduation, one student quit her job as a director of a 4A agency to partner with another alumnus who happened to be CEO of a listed restaurant chain. Together they set up a new restaurant in Wan Chai.

Spread over two years, the CUHK EMBA curriculum is designed to provide a solid foundation in all major business functions. The programme also deals with the changes occurring in different business environments, exposing students to a wide spectrum of local, regional and global case studies and complexities. “There are group projects, individual assignments, field trips, and study visits to leading universities around the world,” explains Chan. He adds that there are

also conferences covering “hot topics” such as big data, Fintech, Blockchain and the Internet of Things (IoT). High-profile speakers are invited to share their knowledge, experiences and new initiatives with students during forums and seminars. A good example is the talk delivered in September by Professor Liu Mingkan, former chairman of the China Banking Regulatory Commission, on the China-led “One Belt, One Road” initiative. As an independent programme, Chan says, the business school has the flexibility to be innovative with curriculum design. “The programme’s extensive alumni network, as well as its good relationships with business entities in the region, is a valuable source of CEO guest speakers and practical experience-sharing sessions,” he says.

To accommodate the work schedules of busy executives, classes are offered on Saturdays and Sundays, so that students generally need to attend classes only once every two to three weeks. While classroom schedules are designed to minimise the effect on work commitments, students also have the time between classes to review the materials and prepare questions for when they next attend class. “It is necessary to provide an opportunity for students to learn, unlearn and relearn during their studies,” says Chan. He adds that they also visit other top universities to gain insights from their leading courses. Over the last three years, students have visited Cambridge, Oxford and Stanford universities. ■

Schools race to be top



Photo: Shutterstock

The surge in MBA studies means business schools must strive to find new ways to offer courses that are fresh, exciting and relevant to the real world, writes **John Cremer**

General demand for an MBA may remain as strong as ever, but business schools offering the qualification in Hong Kong still find themselves in a state of intense competition.

To start with, they have the task of attracting a diverse class of high-level candidates for each successive intake. But, in parallel, they must also ensure that their programme's core courses and choice of electives continue to evolve, fully reflecting the latest

trends, thinking and technologies driving the 21st-century world of business.

With the pace of change ever accelerating, the process is constant. But within the context of a comprehensive grounding in key disciplines such as finance, accounting, strategy and organisational structure, it also gives schools the chance to emphasise particular themes and highlight their individual strengths.

"Our courses are always evolving as that's the way to stay market-relevant," says

Sachin Tipnis, executive director for MBA programmes at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) Business School. "For every cohort, we refresh the programme, incorporating new elements and changes in order to equip students for real-world challenges."

Importantly, though, those changes aren't only centred on what's happening in the classroom, during seminars, or in group projects.

For instance, HKU recently restructured its career services with a view to enhancing

“We see more graduates prepared to eschew traditional corporate roles for start-ups and other entrepreneurial endeavours”

- Sean Ferguson



the overall efficiency, reach and focus. As a result, part-time MBA students can now attend career progression workshops, which can be invaluable for anyone looking to engineer faster promotion or transition into a different sector.

Typically, these sessions deal with topics such as career planning, negotiations, the job landscape, social engagement, and leading others.

Besides that, HKU is putting together a platform to benefit the entire community of students taking MBA, EMBA and other specialised programmes. The aim is to create a common pool of courses, so as to boost cross-programme interaction and learning, at the same time bringing new opportunities for collaboration and networking.

“Careful curriculum design and regular additions allow us to maintain a good balance between theory and practice,” Tipnis says. “It helps that our MBA is based on case studies, using examples of real companies and current industry problems. But the more theoretical aspects are also well covered in core courses, which are taught by faculty members with a strong background in research.”

When it comes to electives, understandably there is more emphasis on practical elements and what it takes to get things done. The school’s policy is to group electives under four main themes seen as having special

relevance for Hong Kong and the Asia region. These are financial management; entrepreneurship, innovation and operation management; marketing and services management; and managing in China and Asia.

Some recent additions include electives on business intelligence and big data, Asian financial markets, marketing for tech-intensive industries, and challenges for 21st-century business leadership.

Many of the modules are taught by industry leaders able to offer first-hand experience and exclusive insights, while other initiatives like the “business lab” help students develop an initial idea into a viable plan for market entry via clearly defined steps.

“Full-time students can undertake ‘live’ consulting projects and internships,” Tipnis says. “While for the part-time cohort, a basic premise is that whatever they learn can immediately be put into practice in the real-life business scenarios encountered in their jobs.”

Almost every MBA programme now sees some form of international experience as essential. It adds an extra dimension and, therefore, is actively encouraged through tailor-made options facilitated by partnerships with institutions around the world.

Accordingly, some HKU groups can spend around four months studying at either

London Business School or Columbia Business School in New York. Others will do shorter international field trips focused on learning about internal markets in EU countries, Japan, and elsewhere around Asia.

“Personally, I am very pleased that applicants increasingly choose a business school based on the ‘fit’ rather than just published ranking lists or reputation,” Tipnis says. “This is great to see. I strongly believe there is no good or bad programme. It is all about finding the right fit and making well informed decisions.”

For Sean Ferguson, director of MBA programmes at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) School of Business and Management, one overall objective is to position students for career success after graduation — and well beyond. To that end, there is a commitment to creating comprehensive international experience with study tours to places like India, Mexico, South Africa and Brazil, and a new range of electives geared to emerging themes for Asia.

So far, these include technology, entrepreneurship, healthcare, energy, luxury marketing, sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Students can also take part in exchange programmes at more than 60 partner schools. And a recent change in policy now makes it possible to take 10 additional credits in order to extract maximum value from the MBA electives.



**Sachin
Tipnis**

"All of this helps in giving broader business exposure and making students better rounded and more open-minded," Ferguson says.

The school has also made a significant investment to "enhance career outcomes". On the one hand, this has meant student groups visiting Dubai and Singapore to research prospects in fast-moving fields such as technology and healthcare. On the other, it has seen the appointment of two specialists to help overseas students and alumni find jobs in Asia, and those based in Hong Kong or the mainland to achieve their respective ambitions.

"With the growth of MBA-level and senior management opportunities in China, more mainland students are embracing the chance to return," Ferguson says. "Also, we see more graduates prepared to eschew traditional corporate roles for start-ups and other entrepreneurial endeavours."

In terms of structure, roughly the first half of the HKUST programme covers core subjects and is designed to teach the functional know-how and foundational theory needed to be a general manager. With those elements in place, the curriculum then focuses on professional specialisation and application. Here, one of the most popular courses is "enhancing professional skills", while another

sees the class discussing and diagnosing contemporary real-world issues.

"After developing these skills, we sponsor students to participate in various international case competitions," Ferguson says. "We have also introduced a social enterprise and venture philanthropy course where students work with local mission-driven organisations. The goal is to build sustainable business models which can increase the impact of those organisations."

Along similar lines, MBA students are also encouraged to work closely with faculty to commercialise innovations, especially if they are linked to the 700-plus patents now held by the university's technology transfer office.

"In many industries, technology has been very disruptive, and that seems sure to continue," Ferguson says. "But Fintech has really taken off as a career path and is diversifying the skill sets needed in the financial services sector. Students interested in product marketing and business development, particularly as it relates to partnerships, have more opportunities than ever in the finance space. The tech industry in Asia also sees significant value in the MBA skill set, and this is where the job growth and higher salaries are."



**Stephanie
Villemagne**

According to Stephanie Villemagne, global director of the MBA programme at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) Business School, new course modules have been offered this year on big data, innovation, and social impact investment. Major steps have also been taken to enhance leadership training and reinforce the career roadmap for students.

"Looking ahead, we are developing Fintech courses for 2017, and will finalise the full launch of the 'flex' mode of learning for our



**Xavier
Duran**

MBA," Villemagne says. "Blending online with traditional face-to-face learning is the future for advanced learning programmes. Approximately 20 per cent of our students are making use of this right now."

She notes too that, fundamentally, the current generation of MBA applicants are looking to advance their careers both vertically and horizontally. This shows commendable pragmatism, but means schools must respond swiftly to changing expectations, while also recognising that tomorrow's workplace may require a markedly different style of management, leadership and communication skills.

“New forms of technology are transforming the way students and faculty learn”

- Norma Harrison



“That is why we appoint teachers from industry with substantial commercial and financial experience, but who also know the latest in areas such as consulting, luxury brand management, and financial investment,” Villemagne says. “For example, the former chief executive of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Park is now teaching our innovation course and, each year, about 20 major companies provide real-life consulting projects, which our students tackle supervised both by professors and corporate executives.”

The CUHK programme offers more than 50 electives, including ones on China capital markets, family business, and investment management. A choice of seven international field trips, and close to 50 exchange partners, provides overseas exposure. And a series of workshops and “boot camps” on topics ranging from sustainability to presentation skills teach the attributes needed to become a respected and responsible leader.

“At a macro level, all students now live with the internet, so we have invested millions of dollars in technology to enable teachers and students to interact in a more efficient manner,” Villemagne says. “Under our new learning model and platform, it will be easier to study remotely, with a fully-fledged team supporting the cycle from admission through coursework, career management and alumni activities.”

Among the overseas-based institutions offering MBAs in Hong Kong, one feature often emphasised is the global nature of their programmes, plus their close connections with multinationals and influential industry leaders.

For executives who travel a lot, they specifically highlight the advantage of being able to attend regular classes and workshops at different international locations, since the same basic curriculum is taught at various centres around the world.

“For example, if your home campus is Hong Kong, you can attend workshops in places like Shanghai, Singapore, Dubai and Brazil,” says Xavier Duran, associate MBA director at Alliance Manchester Business School, at Britain’s University of Manchester. “What makes our programme popular is an innovative curriculum, flexible delivery and a global outlook. But we continue to make changes and add elements to keep it fresh and relevant.”

Those adjustments generally spring from the



Some popular MBA programmes available in Hong Kong

Programme	Fee		Duration (months)	
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	\$585,000	\$432,000 - \$465,000	12-16	24
Chinese University of Hong Kong	\$510,300	\$356,400	12-16	24 - 48
University of Hong Kong	\$513,000	\$354,000	14	24 - 48
City University of Hong Kong	\$256,400 - \$430,940	\$256,400 - \$430,940	12-30	24 - 60
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	N/A	\$229,500	N/A	24 - 48
University of Manchester - Global MBA	N/A	\$348,000 (finance accelerated programme)/ \$386,000 (full programme)	N/A	18 - 24
University of Iowa Tippie MBA programme	N/A			24
Macquarie University Graduate School of Management (HKMA)	\$344,000	\$344,000	12 - 24	36 - 48
University of Northern Iowa	\$147,600		24	24
University of Sunderland RDI MBA	N/A		24	24
University of Leicester/ Heriot-Watt University (HKUSPACE)		\$120,527 \$80,833 (converted from Pounds)		24 - 48
Institute of Advanced Learning (Holmes Institute)	\$158,708		12	
Open University MBA	\$163,673 - \$196,059	\$163,673 - \$196,059	24 - 36	36 - 48





need for students to understand business and management more holistically, and to develop skills essential for meeting new challenges in today's dynamic workplace and shifting economic environment.

One new course on "operationalising and communicating value" reflects the increasing interplay between operations and marketing functions. Another covering business finance and accounting shows how back-office professionals can do more to measure and create value in their companies.

In 2017, MBA project work will also be strengthened for first-year students. From day one, they will manage the operations, marketing, HR, sales and finance functions of a fictional organisation, in competition with other members of the class. In the second year, they will move on to a "live" project handling real business and management issues.

The latest list of electives now includes

options on the digital economy, strategic integrity, big data analytics, and corporate turnaround and financial restructuring. There is also a selection of face-to-face or virtual workshops.

"Our workshops become platforms where all kinds of theories, frameworks and models are brought to life through discussion with fellow students from diverse professional backgrounds," Duran says. "And our teaching approach contributes to practical application of theory by emphasising critical thinking and assessment which require students to draw on their professional expertise."

Though based in Australia, the Macquarie University Graduate School of Management (MGSM) ensures that the MBA programme taught in Hong Kong instils the international outlook that will become even more important for business managers and future board-level executives in the years ahead.

"At MGSM, we develop leaders with global mindsets," says acting dean Professor Norma Harrison. "To do that, we have to adopt new strategies and adapt to a new environment that will continue to change more rapidly than ever before."

In particular, Harrison points to trends like sustainability and the need for businesses to be more environmentally friendly. There is the accelerating pace of advances in technology, which is shaping a more connected world and facilitating faster and more efficient business processes. And there are factors such as the growth in emerging markets and intensified competition in many sectors.

"New forms of technology are transforming the way students and faculty learn," Harrison says. "But we use a constantly monitored and updated knowledge base, real-world case studies, and close links with industry to give MBA students the tools, skills and insights to prosper." ■



Photo: AFP

Counting on career boost

Qualifications in accounting and finance must fall in line with the trends, writes **Chris Davis**

When it comes to helping the next generation of accounting and finance professionals prepare for a successful career, professional bodies need to revise their qualification processes to align with recruitment policies, career development and employer expectations.

With the majority of stakeholders supporting reforms proposed by the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants (HKICPA), the first phase of the new Qualification

Programme (QP) process is expected to be implemented in 2018. The reforms aim to ensure the institute's CPA qualification remains in step with the continual changes in business and professional markets in Hong Kong, as well as being recognised by the Global Accounting Alliance, says Jonathan Ng Tai-sing, HKICPA executive director (qualification and education).

Equally important, Ng says, the reforms are intended to ensure Hong Kong's professional accountants are trained in the skills, expertise and ethics that can support Hong Kong as

an international business and financial centre.

By introducing reforms in phases, beginning in 2018, Ng says current students and QP course providers will have time to adjust to the new syllabus. The reforms are based on comprehensive research, including face-to-face meetings in Hong Kong and the mainland with a variety of stakeholders such as employers, academics, education providers, practitioners, students, and graduates.

Ng says that while the majority of the

“In the information age, employers tell us they are looking for people who can demonstrate higher-order skills such as the ability to think laterally ... and provide innovative solutions”

- Jonathan Ng

technical aspects of the QP syllabus will remain, greater focus will be placed on cyber security and corporate governance, and the use of technology. “In the information age, employers tell us they are looking for people who can demonstrate higher-order skills such as the ability to think laterally, analyse complex problems from different perspectives, and provide innovative solutions,” Ng says. Employers also favour individuals who can communicate effectively and have a strong awareness of ethics.

According to Ng, the most notable changes to the QP structure are the three successive steps, with associate level (10 modules), professional level (four modules) and a final capstone level examination. “We consider the capstone component, a very important addition because through workshops and self-reflective learning activities, it integrates and assesses higher-order skills with the knowledge students have gained from the workplace and previous exams,” says Ng. He also highlights that, in keeping with the government’s policy of supporting an increase in post-secondary education opportunities, the new QP structure provides a common entry point and widens the opportunities for individuals from a non-finance background to join the accounting profession.

Meanwhile, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) has also taken

a major step forward in shaping the future of accountancy by recently unveiling changes to its master’s level qualification.

The qualification is tailored to meet the strategic challenges of the 21st-century economy, says Alice Yip, chairman of ACCA Hong Kong. The redesign enhances it with a greater focus on employability and the practical application of core skills in the contemporary workplace. Changes to the qualification process include new strategic professional-level exams, which will replace the existing format in September 2018. A new

ethics and professional skills module will also be introduced in October 2017.

“The redesign will give students the forward-thinking strategic abilities and advanced skill set required of modern professional accountants,” Yip says. The new format will include a strategic business leader case-study exam, based on a realistic scenario. The aim is to equip students with the skills and technical expertise required by modern companies where decisions need to be made, measured and effectively communicated to the wider organisation. In



Recent launch of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Stock Connect offers greater career opportunities to financial professionals. Li Xiaojia (pictured), CEO of Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing.

addition, the strategic business reporting exam is intended to expose students to the wider context of finance and business reporting, giving them the vital skills needed to explain and communicate to stakeholders the implications of transactions and reporting.

“We are delivering a qualification that meets the demands of professional accountants while maintaining the rigorous standards of technical, ethical and professional skills,” explains Yip.

She says changes to the exam process follow two years of extensive consultation and design testing with hundreds of members, employers, C-suite executives and students from around the world.

To provide more study options, ACCA also offers the world's first master's degree combined with a professional accountancy qualification, delivered in partnership with the University of London. The arrangement allows students to take the master's route while completing their professional

exams, or take the master's degree following their ACCA qualification.

“We will continue to provide the essential learning support to ensure our students achieve success in their exams and careers,” says Yip.

Meanwhile, ACCA's recent “Generation Next” survey of some 19,000 respondents under the age of 36, from 150 countries, revealed that finance professionals are keen to progress in their careers, but believe the paths to success in their current organisations are not clear. Polling among Hong Kong professionals reveals that 98 per cent want to continue working in the same field, but in a more senior position. But 38 per cent are concerned there is not enough capacity or scope available for their next in-house move. As a result, only 29 per cent say they agree that their current organisation offers sufficient opportunities to achieve their career goals.

When asked what attracts them to an employer, the highest score, at 88 per cent, was for financial reward and remuneration, closely followed at 85 per cent by the opportunity to develop skills. Hong Kong respondents are also tech-savvy, with 71 per cent believing technology will enable them to focus on higher-level, value-added work. The

“They want the pay packet and the promotion. But there's a sense of stalling in their careers because opportunities are not clear at work”

- Jane Cheng

“The skills and knowledge complement each other, allowing professionals to provide deeper insights to management, ranging from data and financial analysis to ... long-term planning”

- William Chen



majority - 72 per cent - also believe that a finance background will be valuable for those hoping to be future leaders.

Jane Cheng, head of ACCA Hong Kong, says it is clear from the research findings that young Hong Kong finance professionals are inspirational and ambitious. “They want the pay packet and the promotion. But there’s a sense of stalling in their careers because opportunities are not clear at work. They want to progress and learn more,” says Cheng.

As employers increasingly seek multi-skilled talent, combining an MBA with the internationally recognised qualification offered by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) is an ideal way to establish a firm grounding in business and finance, according to William Chen, deputy chairman, CIMA Hong Kong branch committee. CIMA offers an accelerated “Master’s Gateway” for MBA or master of accountancy holders. These eligible are required to take five exams out of a total 17 - which in 2017 will be reduced to 16 - before sitting the final exam of the CIMA Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) professional qualification.

“The skills and knowledge complement each other, allowing professionals to provide deeper insights to management, ranging from data and financial analysis to technology adoption, market strategies and long-term planning,” Chen says. The accelerated Master’s Gateway is also an ideal way for ambitious professionals to boost their career options, while offering the skills and professional qualifications employers look for. On completion of a recognised MBA programme, Chen says, it should be possible to complete the CIMA exams in 12-18 months.

Not to be confused with the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) qualification, the CIMA

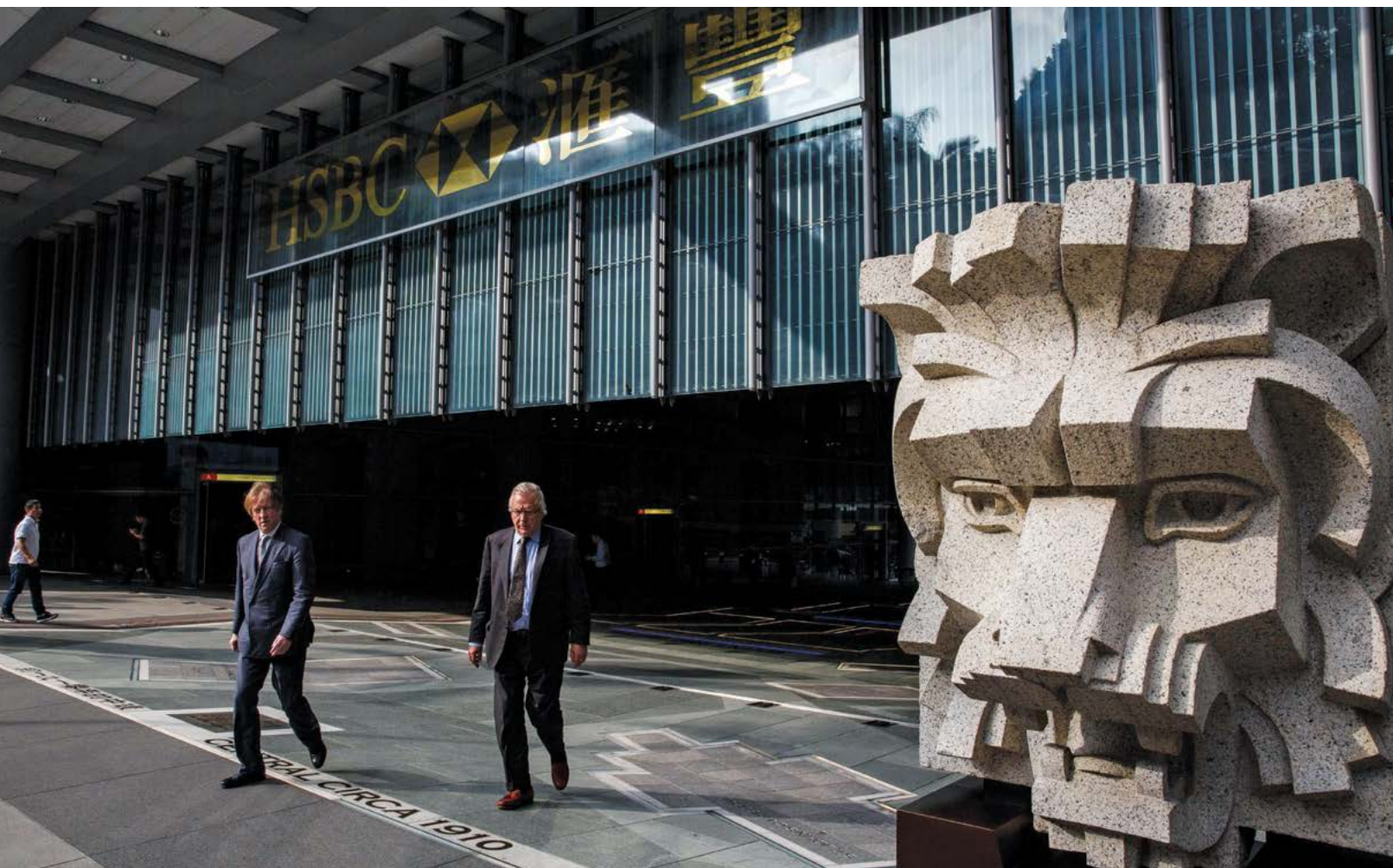
qualification, says Chen, is distinguished by its relevance to business and its focus on developing financial, non-financial and business management skills with leading-edge techniques. The CIMA qualification also places the focus on management and strategy, which involves helping businesses navigate an array of increasingly complex issues. “We like to say that CIMA-qualified professionals join the dots within businesses by telling the entire story using financial and non-financial insights,” notes Chen, who has more than 20 years’ experience of financial management with local and global organisations.

In terms of career mobility opportunities and qualification recognition, Chen says the integration between CIMA and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), which becomes official in 2017, will widen the exposure of the management accounting designation. With more than 220,000 members and students operating in 170 countries, the CIMA is currently the world’s largest professional body for management accountants. The new joint venture will be called the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants and represent about 600,000 members and students. ■



Jonathan Ng

Preparing for the boardroom



A tailor-made course trains non-executive directors to fight for the interests of shareholders and stakeholders, **Chris Davis** reports

Corporate governance, accountability and leadership are topics high on the priority lists of many company boards. And independent directors are facing a host of new challenges and expectations as they come under the scrutiny of shareholders and other interested parties.

With the impact of globalisation, Asian business leaders have to keep up with various reforms taking place in US, Europe

and Asia countries which are changing the dynamic of boardrooms, says Hannah Carmichael, *Financial Times*, programme director of NED Asia. Within such diverse product markets and geographies, Carmichael highlights the need for board members to be prepared to represent the best interests of shareholders and stakeholders, as a lack of knowledge and awareness can be costly.

The *Financial Times* non-executive director diploma is developed in Britain, and

has been adapted to include directors' liabilities and duties in Asian markets, and is based on the Hong Kong Corporate Governance Code.

"The six-month programme has been structured to provide independent directors with the tools they need to maximise company value and ensure long-term sustainability," says Carmichael. She adds that the programme covers the entire range of skills needed for any non-executive role, fulfilling new executive

“The diploma has been structured to provide independent directors with the tools they need to maximise company value and ensure long-term sustainability”

- Hannah Carmichael

education requirements for board members and enabling them to bring competence and credibility to the board, and master board power dynamics with confidence. “In a competitive industry, this diploma will enable individuals to differentiate themselves from other candidates for increasingly sought-after board positions,” Carmichael notes.

To align with the busy schedules of executives, and provide flexibility, about 90 per cent of the five-module diploma is delivered online. Modules include the effective non-executive director, director duties and liabilities, board structure and performance, audit and financial reporting, and risk management and internal control.

In addition to the five modules, a fundamental part of the programme is two obligatory workshops where participants have the opportunity to learn from, and interact with, a panel of experts in their respective fields. Carmichael explains that the first half-day workshop at the start of the course will provide an introduction to the topics covered, whilst the second workshop will span two days, focusing on the all-important issue of effective boardroom behaviour. The second workshop, hosted in Macau, provides an opportunity for participants to network with each other, and develop their skills on an individual basis, as well as within a group.

The modules are assessed separately. For example, one requires a learning log, as well as boardroom prep and dilemmas. Others are assessed by a case study submission. Meanwhile, the fourth is appraised in a three-hour controlled-assessment based on a set of accounts, taken at the end of the course. Each method makes up a third of the candidates’ final pass or fail grade.

Carmichael says that completing the course will help individuals improve their board performance by dealing with real-life issues that may occur during board tenure. At the same time, participants can develop the skills necessary to challenge executives and contribute to an effective board culture, while increasing individual marketability and the possibility of being appointed to stronger boards.

Other benefits include developing an international network of outstanding alumni, improved depth of understanding of personal strengths, and identifying weaknesses in relation to board dynamics. To add value to the diploma programme, breakfast and evening events are staged to provide continual learning opportunities for diploma alumni.

Cristiana Schiavolin, managing partner, Praxis, Hong Kong, who completed the diploma in 2014, says the programme proved to be as complete

as it is demanding. “I was looking to acquire a different point of view on corporate dynamics that could support developments in my career as well as enrich my preparation for future roles,” says Schiavolin, adding that the programme offered a contemporary view on how boards could act as modern partners to the business in contributing diverse knowledge, geographic experience, independent thinking and multi-cultured points of view.

Another graduate Dr Lan Ma, global marketing director, DuPont Photovoltaic Fluoromaterials, Shanghai, says: “Not only has it equipped me well to effectively serve on the board as a non-executive director, it also helps me to approach my current executive role with a fresh perspective.” ■

A man in a dark grey suit, white shirt, and black tie is shown from the chest up. A blue digital wireframe grid is overlaid on the right side of his suit, extending from his shoulder down to his waist. The background is a solid dark blue.

HUMANITIES, EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

Voyages of discovery



Special social science master's courses offer students a whole new perspective, not just on global issues but also about themselves, reports **Andrea Zavadszky**

While university programmes are often interesting and useful, they are seldom life-changing. But Wang Zhengfei, who began studying for his master's degree in September, feels that the course is already changing him and how he views his future.

Wang, who studied journalism on the mainland and was an exchange student in Sweden for a year, saw an introduction to the master of social sciences in global and Hong Kong studies (MSSGHKS) offered by The Education University Hong Kong (EUIHK)

at an education and career fair, and found it very attractive.

"We are not just studying theories; the case studies are very lively and I'm learning about issues in a lot of countries. I started to feel closer to, and more caring about, human beings in general – this is a new kind of feeling," Wang says.

The course was launched this academic year and aims at developing students' multidisciplinary perspectives in the fields of politics, economics and sociology. Once students have a good grasp of the interlinked nature of economics and politics, and a

global overview through finishing four core courses in global studies, Hong Kong is placed in its global context via four other core courses. Students assess whether any lessons can be learned from other societies, and how to approach particular local problems.

According to Dr Adam Cheung Ka-lok, MSSGHKS programme director and assistant professor in the Department of Social Sciences at EUHK, the course is unique. There are no comparable Hong Kong studies courses which, at the same time, provide such a global perspective.

“For example, a lot of people see the rise of localism as a Hong Kong problem. This course explains that although Hong Kong is unique, what we have today is also a problem in other societies. Then we turn to Hong Kong again and see if any lessons can be learned from them,” Cheung explains.

He adds that politics and economics nowadays cannot be separated, and students need to understand the international relations perspective to understand how global forces affect Hong Kong’s economy, and what is likely to be the long-term direction. These insights will offer a unique perspective on strategic planning for anyone in a business-oriented career.

“All the courses are very useful, whether it is economics, social science or culture. They are all intertwined in a big organic system. There is also more to Hong Kong than meets the eye, not just the economy,” Wang says.

There are numerous opportunities to work in groups and refine communication, leadership and teamwork skills. One such enlightening project was in the global society course on infectious diseases. As Wang’s team gathered information, they realised that transmission of diseases is only part of the problem. It is also closely connected

to the general well-being of the population, countries’ economic performance and other aspects.

“Understanding the interrelationship, we gained a clearer sense of how to predict, prevent and deal with global diseases,” Wang says.

He adds that while trying to keep up with all the most recent events, such as Brexit and Trump’s victory in the US presidential election, the course gives students a method to look at and analyse events and different angles to examine social issues. For example, when analysing the US election, the class also talk about the financial markets and how they digest events, react and move forward.

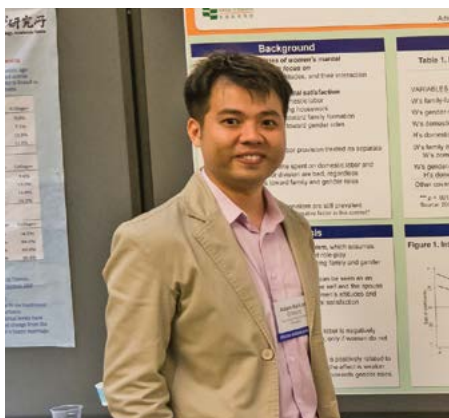
“I am so surprised they have all these perspectives I have never dreamed about,” Wang says. “We see things from many

“We see things from many different dimensions and know we have the power to change things”

- Wang Zhengfei



Leung Ting-ho (left) graduates from the master’s in social science education in Greater China studies. He chose the programme because he felt a broader understanding of the topic would help his career.



The Education University of Hong Kong, formerly the Hong Kong Institute of Education, offers a wide array of postgraduate courses. Pictured: Wang Zhengfei (left) and Adam Cheung Ka-lok (right).

“A lot of people see the rise of localism as a Hong Kong problem. This course explains that although Hong Kong is unique, what we have today is also a problem in other societies”

- Adam Cheung Ka-lok

different dimensions and know we have the power to change things. It is very exhilarating. It gives you new ways to reflect on who you are and the life you want to live after the programme.”

The course is also opening up more career opportunities for Wang. Previously, he thought his career path was restricted to journalism. But when he recently visited EUHK's career development centre, he received detailed suggestions about future job opportunities. Among the various options, his knowledge will stand him in good stead in business and even banking. He could also become a civil servant or work for an NGO and progress all the way to working for the UN.

“Now I have a broader sense of the world

and have started to see opportunities everywhere,” he enthuses.

Cheung emphasises that the mentoring system means faculty meet students one-on-one several times a year and offer advice about career choices or other questions, while potential employers are also invited to meet students through informal channels.

The university has also recently established the Academy of Hong Kong Studies Research Centre, which is spurring more and more scholarly research, and has widened options for those who wish to continue towards a PhD.

While about half the students are fresh graduates, others have worked in community organisations, political parties, journalism,

the legal profession and various industries. The course is also available part-time, and students who are currently working can benefit from being able to directly apply the theories they learn to their work.

Meanwhile, the master's in social science education in Greater China studies, also at EUHK, is a programme differentiated by an education aspect and a focus on Greater China. Launched in 2011, it gives more attention to the political economy of Greater China, as well as education at a macro level. This includes recent reform, the impact of education on society and vice versa, according to the programme's director, Dr Alfred Wu Muluan, assistant professor in the Department of Asian and Policy Studies at EUHK.

"It is a good programme for those who like social sciences. Learning about Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau provides multiple perspectives," says Wu. "Many Hong Kong students only know about the territory - and not even in depth!"

The programme is made particularly interesting by the opportunity to go on field trips. The Taiwan trip takes 10 days and students have the chance to talk with policymakers, NGOs and government leaders, and visit universities to meet academics. There are also field visits, conference and case-study workshops. Students have an opportunity to go to Shenzhen and discuss the city's healthcare reforms, and to Macau for two days, attending Macau University lectures, as well as visiting museums.

"Taiwan is unique and studying it is definitely valuable. I got a chance to talk to people from all walks of life, participate in lectures, go on a sightseeing tour, build friendships with my classmates. I had been in Taiwan before but the field visit was definitely unforgettable," says Leung Ting-ho, who now works in an administrative role at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Leung chose the programme because he felt that understanding the whole of Greater China was essential to his career

development. From this point of view, the course he found most useful was comparative social policy, which offers a comprehensive review of the concepts of social policies in the three areas studied.

Although many of the students are fresh graduates, teachers and senior managers from primary and secondary schools also find the course practical and helpful in climbing the career ladder.

"About a quarter of our students become teachers, and another quarter journalists, while others work with NGOs or in the private sector. We have students doing their PhDs in Cambridge and York, in Britain, and also in Taiwan," Wu says.

At the moment the intake is mostly from Hong Kong and the mainland, but the university is making efforts to create a more international student body and attract candidates from Southeast Asia and the Middle East. ■

“Learning about Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau provides multiple perspectives. Many Hong Kong students only know about the territory – and not even in depth”

- Alfred Wu



Translating into creativity



Photo: Shutterstock

MA programmes in language and media offer vital skills for promising careers writes **Andrea Zavadszky**

After reaching a high level of proficiency in a language, many people feel stuck. It can become hard to learn what's needed to get to the next level. But there are several master's degrees available to help students achieve a specific objective or career goal.

For example, the master of arts in translation and bilingual communication (MA TBC) at the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) attracts students who want to hone their translation and interpretation skills and, thereby, advance their career opportunities.

It's also useful for those who want to change fields, or simply become more proficient.

"If you want to enhance your English skills, this programme will bring you a number of benefits," explains Janice Jun Pan, assistant professor for the translation programme at HKBU's department of English language and literature.

The degree course consists of three streams. One covers consecutive, simultaneous, and conference interpreting. The practical stream has a stronger focus on translation, with some interpreting. The research stream is for

students who want to go on to do a PhD.

The new interpreting course was launched last year to satisfy demand, and it has proved very popular. Pan, who is also director of the MA TBC programme, says the three streams are not ironclad.

Students may be able to switch streams if they have a good reason, although no one has needed to do this so far.

The training usually involves translating between English and Cantonese or Putonghua. At the beginning, students practise switching between their mother

“Some of our students have also become English or Chinese language teachers, and have trained senior executives in multinational companies”

- Janice Jun Pan

tongue and their first foreign language, then their second foreign language, progressing from the easier task to the more difficult one.

Even students who are native speakers have something to learn. Experienced students still need to pick up strategic competence. For example, they should develop a strategy for how and when to switch languages. They must learn about best practices, and further develop an encyclopaedic knowledge.

Pan says the programme welcomes students from different disciplines and professions, including lawyers, engineers, economists, and medical professionals. Such students already have a valuable knowledge of the vocabulary that is used in their respective professions.

Best practices include the requirement to translate each sentence truthfully, although tact still plays a part.

“Untrained bilingual people acting as interpreters can [easily become biased] and decide what to translate and what not to translate. That can be very dangerous in situations when a medical decision has to be made, or in politics,” Pan says.

The course also develops students’ critical thinking and cultural sensitivities in matters such as gender issues. They learn to communicate in a successful and effective way, avoiding conflict while rendering the content truthfully.

The enhanced communication skills are especially useful for those students seeking employment in mediation and public relations.

Sharp critical thinking honed by revising drafts is helpful in advertising and copywriting. By using the presentation skills learned from interpreting, students have found employment as news anchors. Others have used the knowledge they gained about the cultural background of the languages to work as consultants.

“Some of our students have also become English or Chinese language teachers, and have trained senior executives in multinational companies,” Pan adds. “Finally, some have learned the ins and outs of organising conferences and founded their own small companies which serve the event-management market.”

Lin Han, a student from Wenzhou who graduated with a BA in English, and worked as a language teacher, applied to several programmes, but finally decided to take the MA TBC. He agrees with Pan that the course has many advantages.

“As an interpreting major, I can get to know many things about the world situation. I can also develop my communication skills, which will come in useful when I start my own company,” he says.

Lin’s favourite “master class” was taught by a very experienced translator, who also had many deep thoughts about life. He helped

students to develop their independent thinking skills. While teaching students how to translate ancient Chinese poetry, the teacher encouraged them to read all the existing translations, criticise them, and develop their own versions.

“You must have your own point of view and have self-confidence,” Lin says, adding that 13 out of 20 students failed in this class.

Lin enjoyed the adaptation and rewriting elements of the course. Students had to rewrite an item of news designed for adults to make it easier for children to understand, and do the same for an article about Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China. They also learned that readers from different countries will have different perspectives on a story. “The schedule is intense and the professors are very strict. But my writing skills have certainly improved a lot,” Lin says.



Janice Jun Pan

The job of translator can be lonely. Pan encourages teamwork among her students and arranges mock conferences on topics like the environment. One team prepares the presentations, while another works on the interpretation.

Pan explains that the department tries to engage students in real-life work, such as translating and interpreting at events organised by HKBU. Students receive thank you letters or certificates, which they can mention on their resume as proof of work experience.

Lin, for example, translated a poem by American author Brian Kim Stefans, who attended the university's international writers' workshop. Lin was also the MC of one of the programmes, which included a recital of Stefans' poems.

While on stage, Stefans wondered if someone could read the poem in Chinese.



Lin Han



Timothy Chan



Lin stepped up to read it, saying that he was also the translator. It was a memorable event, Lin says.

Pan explains that students need to know the local styles of language in Hong Kong, the mainland, and Taiwan, as each place has its own distinct style and vocabulary.

Faculty members come from these three places and from overseas to offer students a wider understanding of spoken styles and cultures.

For those who want to enhance their Chinese-language skills, HKBU offers an MA in Chinese literature, language and culture.

"We cultivate a deeper knowledge of Chinese culture in our students. They have to choose a major from the fields of language, literature and culture, and write a thesis to graduate," says Professor Timothy Chan, programme director at the Chinese department at HKBU.

The programme is strong on classical literature, but students are more interested in film and contemporary writing, Chan says, with the most popular course being Chinese literature, love and movies. Some new faculty members joined recently to strengthen the department's contemporary literature studies. "Very few students come from a Chinese major, and many come from totally unrelated backgrounds, like engineering and biology," says Chan.

Li Muxuan, for example, graduated with a BA in broadcasting from Qiqihar University in Heilongjiang. He is keen to teach Chinese at college level and studies very hard. His PhD application is currently under review.

"I mostly enjoy the presentations. It is a new teaching method for me, but I am good at speaking, so I think I will get good scores," he says. The most useful class for him will be research methodology, Li explains.

Both Lin and Li say that teamwork is a double-edged sword. While it is exciting to work with others, the standards and commitment of the students can vary greatly, and that holds back those who are keen to excel. "I am not really a big fan of teamwork in terms of efficiency. Not everybody wants to study hard," Lin says.

The degree can improve the career outlook of those working in education. Primary and secondary school teachers can study part-time and finish the programme in two years.

Some Chinese students prefer to take time out before starting work, but others find a job even before they graduate. Those doing a PhD will probably continue in Hong Kong or Taiwan.

Hong Kong has been slowly changing its traditional image. The all-encompassing financial and business focus is gradually giving way to the notion of a promising regional arts hub. In line with these



Kimburley Choi

changes, the demand for young people who understand the media business and curating art, is growing.

With this in mind, the City University of Hong Kong's (CityU) School of Creative Media last year revised and restructured its humanities-oriented master of arts in creative media (MACM) programme. This aims to develop competent graduates with inquiring minds who are media-literate, and who are able to ask the right questions and think for themselves.

The MACM has two streams. The practical curating art and media (CAM) stream's objective is to foster future leaders in the sector. The more theoretical media cultures (MC) stream encompasses media history, theory and criticism as well as digital media, and offers post-graduate level preparation.

The programme's annual intake is around 110 to 120 students in the two streams, with about 50 CAM and 60 to 70 CM students. "Some of them are fresh graduates and some have already worked in the media or the arts. The average age is 26. We look for students with a strong background in media studies, arts or humanities, but we have students with a lot of different backgrounds as well, such as business, law and electronic engineering", says Kimburley Choi Wing-yee, assistant professor, School of Creative Media (SCM), and programme director, MACM.

There are visiting students from local

universities and overseas, including from Singapore, Europe and the US. Hong Kong students make up about 30 per cent of the intake, while the rest are from the mainland.

"Our faculty is drawn from 14 countries; it has an aggressively global orientation," Choi says. "The curriculum covers local, regional and global topics and promotes an international outlook."

For example, in a project on Disney, students explored different aspects of the company, a global media organisation and entertainment giant, as well as a cultural and economic presence. In addition, the local focus is on examining the relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland.

A regionally-focused task was to go out in the city and take photos portraying the lives of foreign domestic workers.

The course requirement is 30 credits, half each in required courses and electives. "Core courses for the two streams are different, but there are lots of electives to choose from and those overlap," says Choi, whose research covers a wide area, including consumption, cultural ethnography, parenting, urban development and visual sociology.

Students in the CAM stream are being groomed to take on leadership roles in the arts and media, curating and exhibition sectors. They have important skills in art collection and research. They also learn about the impact of digital media on art institutions and will work on strategies to address them, while creating exhibitions through the use of digital media and new technologies.

On the other hand, the MC stream emphasises critical enquiry and analysis and enhances students' media literacy across categories, with classes in media history and criticism. The course's independent study and research project in media studies prepares them to work on a future PhD thesis. Students are also required to develop and express their views via media production.

Edwin Lo graduated from SCM in 2008 and has worked in a number of positions since, including freelance graphic and web designing and in a gallery and art space. Presently, he is a part-time technician at HKBU and an artist working with sound.

"The most enjoyable part of the programme is the teachers and the reading. The learning process allows you to gain a wide range of reflections on what you are doing as an artist and as a human being. What I have learned has opened up a new universe," says the part-time MC student.

He points to last semester's two courses on phenomenology and contemporary philosophy as especially useful. They were very demanding but were made enjoyable by the lecturers' careful planning and input. While the reading list was long and the learning intense, the interesting discussions deeply influenced him in thinking about the paradigm of art and its production.

"The learning experience at SCM helps me to rethink what I am doing as an artist. It inspires me and deepens my artistic thinking process," he says.

CityU provides student development services and supports career development through talks, workshops and employment services. Lo says lecturers give students very good advice about their career options. ■



Edwin Lo

More than data and 'reality'

PolyU launches new learning platforms in a bid to beat disruption threat, writes Rebecca Simpson

Should today's entrepreneurs and business leaders take a traditional educational path? It's easy to put forward an argument questioning the relevance of a postgraduate degree when the likes of Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Jobs, Richard Branson, and Larry Ellison have all made such an impact on the world without ever graduating from college.

Add to this the digital disruption of so many industries and suddenly the conversation becomes even more interesting. And that has created a big challenge for the education sector as it struggles to prepare students for the undefined jobs of the future.

Digital disruption is a leading concern for the C-suite in Asia and beyond. So where does that leave today's postgraduate course providers?

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) puts forward a strong case for the value of further education with its range of programmes, which have a digital focus and have produced many successful alumni.

The basic aim is to offer relevant content for today's professionals. Two good examples are the postgraduate scheme in computing and the executive master in digital leadership (EMDL).

The EMDL is already producing a new generation of successful business leaders. It's the first interdisciplinary programme of its kind in Hong Kong combining computational thinking, innovation and leadership learning.

It is a unique course, says EMDL programme director, Dr Vincent Ng, associate professor of the department of computing at PolyU.

"Unlike other available

"It encourages an innovative approach to designing customer experiences," says Ng.

The course combines the theory of innovation management, disruptive technology and digital strategies with what the school calls "live business learning". There are electives, an international digital leadership forum, study tours and a capstone project.

"The project lets students integrate the subjects learned and engage in a critical assessment of their work, translating their knowledge into practical applications for their business," says Ng. "Participants are able to identify digital disruptions in the global marketplace and adopt a 'computational thinking' approach. This combines technology, design and business methodologies. It will drive innovation in practices, processes, products and services."

The programme is designed to give students relevant knowledge and skills to lead hi-tech developments. It also looks to instil positive values and winning attitudes, and to give students a better chance for career advancement.

By enhancing digital transformation, PolyU has also incorporated educational technology in the EMDL course. "With the advance of online courses, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and SPOCs (Small Private Online Courses) have become important strategies in teaching and learning at PolyU," says Ng. "The EMDL programme is adopting this mode of teaching to enable flexibility, and deliver up-to-date and relevant knowledge."

The postgraduate scheme in computing has a 25-year history. Even so, it has an ultra-modern take on course content.

postgraduate programmes, like an MBA that focuses on business management, and a master of science that is technically strong, the EMDL programme blends disciplines.





Simon Shiu

It offers students insights on the latest industry developments via lectures from renowned speakers from the IT industry.

An evolving curriculum now covers subjects such as the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, and smart cities. Dr Simon Shiu, assistant professor at the department of computing at PolyU, says: "Our department has been very successful in producing graduates with lifelong learning abilities who can deal with fast-changing IT technologies and computing applications."

The course sets students on a trajectory of constant learning. "The postgraduate scheme of computing is designed so that students can become self-motivated to explore the ongoing developments in the field," says Shiu.

Learning methods and pedagogies are all student-centred, but supported by guidance from highly experienced professors and other software and system resources.

The course runs 18 months for full-time students, or 30 months for part-timers. "The scheme covers cutting-edge technologies in system, software and computing applications, including e-commerce and information systems," Shiu explains.

A comprehensive curriculum offers over 40 advanced subjects. It caters to students from a range of backgrounds with different academic and career goals. "Subjects include information security, big data, Fintech, cloud computing, social media analytics and the Internet of Things," Shiu says.

The course content reflects current and future market demand, with a focus on Hong Kong's role in the "One Belt One Road" initiative.

"Our programme aims to broaden students' international perspectives through our collaborations with overseas partners," Shiu says. "Graduates are equipped with comprehensive and professional IT knowledge, as well as practical skills such as critical thinking, effective communication, problem solving, and lifelong learning skills. These are all beneficial to career development."

Besides classroom lectures and coursework, students are given opportunities to interact with industry experts and peers, sharing ideas and experiences. This provides a chance to apply theory, while building up a strong professional network for the students who

are seeking to develop their careers. PolyU's department of computing continuously conducts advanced research to stay up to date with the world's technological developments.

The school has established joint labs with leaders such as IBM and Microsoft. "These joint laboratories support research activities, and aid teaching and learning, as well as knowledge transfer," says Shiu. "They also open space for producing world-renowned output applicable to commercial and industrial uses, and create high values in both education and research aspects."

He adds that PolyU is producing a new generation of Hong Kong entrepreneurs, Shiu adds. "An increasing number of our graduates begin their careers by developing start-ups," he says. ■



Vincent Ng

A man in a dark grey suit, white shirt, and black tie is shown from the chest up. A blue wireframe grid is overlaid on the right side of his suit jacket and arm, extending from the shoulder down to the waist. The background is a solid dark blue.

CAREER TIPS

Finding the perfect course

Outstanding students and graduates share their MBA experience and career aspirations

Prospective students weighing up different MBA courses must look at more than just the core curriculum, electives and seminars, and what they promise in terms of future career advancement.

It is also essential to consider the practicalities of how to fit a major extra commitment into or around what, for most people, is already a busy day-to-day timetable.

"That's why I was looking for a programme with flexibility," says Wilfred Leung, a recent graduate of the part-time Global MBA offered in Hong Kong by the University of Manchester. "The course uses a 'blended' method combining online sessions with face-to-face workshops taught by academic staff who fly in from Britain. This works well for anyone who is studying, while also keeping up with the demands of a full-time job."

For Leung, it was similarly important to choose a programme which would provide genuine international experience. In this respect, he had the choice of attending workshops in Shanghai, Singapore, Dubai and Sao Paulo, besides Hong Kong and Manchester. That kind of opportunity was deliberately designed to facilitate interaction between students from different parts of the world, thereby opening eyes and creating a whole new network of useful connections.

It is also a natural extension of the school's policy of looking for a diversity of nationalities and industry backgrounds in each intake. This encourages lively classroom discussions, spurred by different ideas and

viewpoints. And it highlights the fact that each challenge or business problem should be assessed on its merits, and that no approach or solution is automatically right.

Leung's own class included students from the mainland, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, the United States and Europe. He is in no doubt that this mix contributed significantly to the overall learning experience.

"Clearly, the programme's quality and reputation were also major considerations," he says. "Fortunately, as one of the first two business schools established in Britain, there is a long history of academic excellence."

As a trained scientist with no other formal business education, his specific goal was to pick up modern management skills and know-how, which could be put to work in the non-profit sector. He is general manager of the Charles K. Kao Foundation for Alzheimer's Disease, which focuses on dementia care and education. The role entails oversight of fundraising functions, project management and general administration.

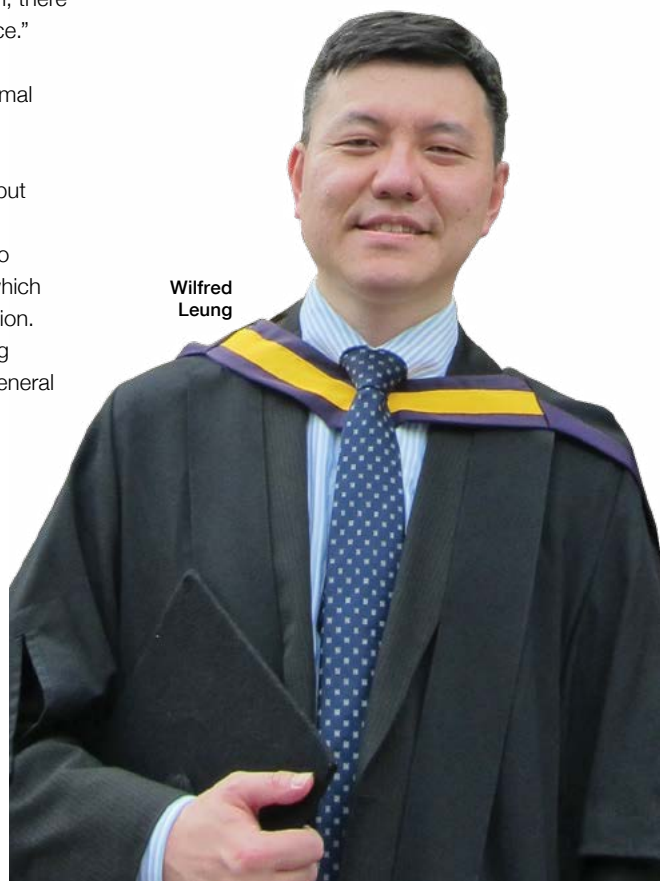
"The MBA struck a good balance between the theoretical aspects and what happens in practice," Leung says. "The 'Manchester Method' also emphasises the value of learning by doing, with plenty of real-life case studies and projects requiring a practice-based approach."

He adds that the time and work involved is a serious commitment and should not be undertaken

lightly. The key is to stay focused, be well-organised and, as far as possible, stick to a clear routine.

"It was demanding, but not impossible," Leung says. "After all, time management and prioritisation are also important aspects of business training. Along the way, what I found particularly worthwhile was being able to apply lessons from the course to my daily work. The MBA definitely broadened my horizons and has enabled me to see things from several different perspectives."

Wilfred
Leung



From gaining first-hand insights from household name Silicon Valley companies and adapting wisdom from the Chinese classics to learning about cutting-edge economics and business management, Maurice Mo, a class of 2016 Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) Business School graduate, says his EMBA experience took him outside his comfort zone but was worth every minute of it.

As Asia-Pacific chief operating officer for global information security at an international investment bank, Mo says staying ahead of the curve in a complex and increasingly disruptive business world is not easy. This prompted him to join the CUHK EMBA programme. “Staying ahead means you must unlearn, learn, and relearn in order to stay competitive,” says Mo, who chose the programme because of its long history, strong alumni network, and its vision of combining tradition with modernity.

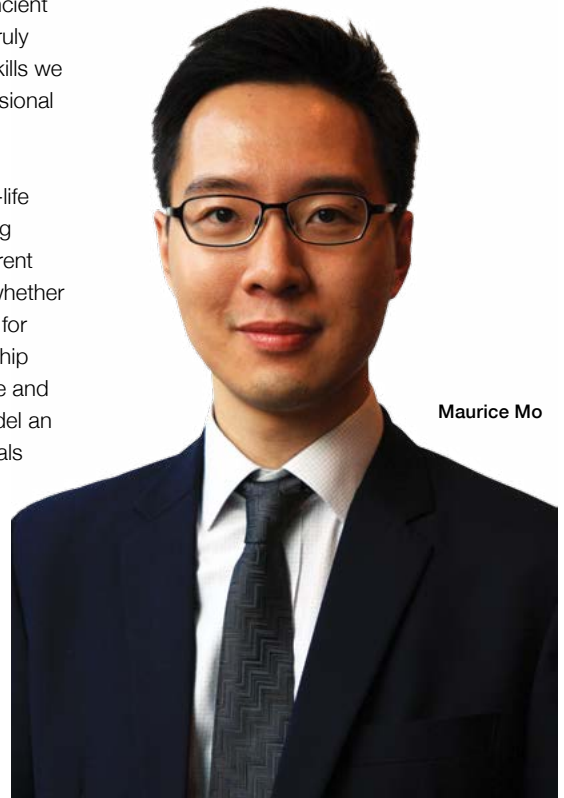
From his interactions with those managing strategy, people and business operations, Mo says his EMBA studies have added new dimensions to his career and his daily work. “The insights and framework for thinking have helped me in defining strategy, presenting and negotiating - and sometimes making and managing difficult decisions,” explains Mo, who adds that the diverse background and extensive experience of fellow students helped broaden his knowledge and abilities.

Importantly, Mo says the topics covered in the programme are relevant and applicable to today’s business environment. One example is how to analyse US interest rates and the impact they have on the Asia region and the Hong Kong macro environment. Mo was surprised and motivated by learning from the wisdom of one of the oldest Chinese classics, the *I Ching* about leadership in a course taught by professor Mun Kin-chok. “The concept of modern management and leadership conducted through the ancient wisdom of balance and harmony is truly inspirational because it teaches us skills we can apply in our personal and professional lives,” says Mo.

Another highlight was the use of real-life business cases, as well as performing analysis and due diligence from different perspectives, which can determine whether to invest or not. Of particular interest for Mo was an exercise in entrepreneurship where students work in groups of five and choose to launch a start-up or remodel an existing business. They pitch proposals to real investors in an attempt to raise funding. Also unforgettable was the global business and management study trip to the US, which included company visits to some of today’s most talked-about global enterprises including Tesla, Airbnb, Facebook, Google, The North Face, Plantronics and FireEye, to learn about

management, innovation, and transformation.

“Our visit to Silicon Valley enabled us to learn first-hand insights from world-leading innovators and disruptors,” notes Mo, who adds that the planning stage, approaching the companies, travel logistics and company visits were all managed by his EMBA class. “One of the crucial lessons I learned was the value of what you learn when you step outside your comfort zone,” concludes Mo.



Maurice Mo



Steven Lee

As Abbott's general manager in Hong Kong, Steven Lee is responsible for the strategy and direction of the overall nutrition organisation. He holds a BA in economics from Northumbria University in Britain, a master's in IFA from Newcastle University, and an MBA from the University of Hong Kong. He is a British national, but career-wise is completely energised by the dynamic environment of Asia.

Q: What were you doing before you embarked on your MBA journey?

A: Prior to joining the HKU MBA programme I was working for Heinz. I was business manager for both the retail and food service segments in Hong Kong.

Q: What was your main motivation in doing an MBA?

A: Career progression and a desire to change industry. Personally, having a purpose and believing in what you do is key to a successful career.

Transitioning to the healthcare sector, and seeing how your products can change and improve people's lives, helped me find my calling and personal purpose.

I made it a mission to get an MBA to live life to the fullest.

Q: What is the single most important lesson you learned?

A: Strength in diversity and teamwork. Given the diversity of the MBA cohort, you gain

a greater appreciation of other industries, people and cultures.

In the real world we face complex challenges. When a team aligns and wholeheartedly moves in a single direction, great results can be achieved.

Q: What are you doing now? Did your MBA help in the transition and change?

A: I am now with Abbott Laboratories, serving as the general manager for the nutrition division, as well as the acting management representative for all Abbott divisions in Hong Kong.

Unequivocally, I can say that the HKU MBA helped me in achieving this position. Broadening my understanding in areas such as corporate finance, strategic marketing, and the global economy gave me a wider skill set with which to manage large organisations.

Q: If there was one thing you would change about your MBA experience, what would it be?

A: I "doubled up" and took two topics during some five-week modules. Looking back, I should have taken even more time to collaborate and work with my MBA peers. Maybe I would have enjoyed the MBA experience even more.



Edmond Chan

Edmond Chan is AllianceBernstein's regional Chief Financial Officer. He oversees accounting, financial planning and analysis, regulatory reporting, M&A, treasury, payroll and tax functions.

Chan graduated from the University of Hong Kong with a BA in business administration (accounting and finance). He earned his MBA from the University of Hong Kong and is CPA-certified in Hong Kong.

Q: What were you doing before taking your MBA?

A: I took the part-time HKU MBA programme. Along the way, I was the regional financial controller of AllianceBernstein (AB) which provides worldwide asset management services to investors. I was responsible for financial control for the Asia ex-Japan region. Prior to joining AB, I was the audit manager at PricewaterhouseCoopers. My professional career began at Arthur Andersen.

Q: What was your main motivation for doing an MBA?

A: While I had a solid background in accounting and auditing, the MBA allowed me to diversify my skills and build confidence in other elements of a business. Not only did I continue to enhance my academic and professional knowledge of business administration, it was also a great opportunity to remain apprised of the current global market environment. Apart from that, pursuing an MBA gave me great networking

opportunities with fellow classmates, as well as access to the extensive alumni network.

Q: What is the single most important lesson you learned from the MBA experience?

A: I learned about the importance of diversity. During my MBA studies, I worked with smart, talented people who work in different industries and have diverse credentials. The thought-provoking and constructive debate I had with them was very enlightening. Great minds think alike may not be a universal truth. Through group assignments, I acquired new insights into how people think about problems in different ways.

Q: What are you doing now? Did your MBA help in the transition and change?

A: I am still working at AB. Two years after completing the HKU MBA programme, I have stepped up to the position of regional Chief Financial Officer. As such, I oversee a wide range of functions for the region. My MBA enabled me to acquire an in-depth view of the business world, polish my presentation skills, and appreciate practicalities.

Q: If there was one thing you would change about your MBA experience, what would it be?

A: With hindsight, I should have taken even more elective courses which went beyond my comfort zone. One example I have in mind is technology-related. Today, our business cannot afford to miss the digital wave. Globally, technology is a real disrupter in many ways. A tech-immersed generation has grown up and is shaping our society and economy. It is important to keep up to speed on this front.

Giuliana Auinger



Giuliana Auinger is a director at KPMG China's Global Strategy Group. She started her management consulting career 10 years ago, and it took her from London (with Diamond Management & Technology Consultants and PwC) to New York (with Booz & Company) to Hong Kong (with Axiom and KPMG).

Auinger attained a BSc in mathematics and economics from the University of Bristol in Britain, and is studying for a part-time MBA at the University of Hong Kong.

Q: What were you doing before starting your MBA?

A: Taking my MBA on a part-time basis meant I could continue a full-time career while pursuing my studies. When I started, I was the practice manager for Axiom's Hong Kong office. Prior to that, I was a management consultant in New York, and London.

Q: What was your main motivation in doing an MBA?

A: I believe in the importance of complementing business experience with rigorous academic training. The HKU MBA's experience-learning approach to education allows me to acquire new skills and knowledge, and gives me the opportunity to contextualise theoretical principles and apply them effectively in the real world.

Q: What is the single most important lesson you have learned so far?

A: It is the importance of humility. In each and every class, no matter how familiar a subject may be, there is always something one can learn. A person who keeps an open mind has a strong desire to learn from others, and stays curious always gets the most out of their experiences.

Q: What are you doing now? Did your MBA help in the transition and change?

A: Currently, I am a director at KPMG's Global Strategy Group. We help clients develop and implement better strategies, leveraging the power of transformation to help them achieve their goals objectives. The MBA is giving me an opportunity to combine my ambition for advanced studies with my desire to further a business career. It also offers the rigorous academic foundation and diverse exposure required to become a better consultant.

Q: If there was one thing you would change about your MBA experience, what would it be?

A: Studying for an MBA part-time means balancing work, life and studies. As a result, I have a lot less time to get familiar with a subject, and, most importantly, a lot less time to interact with fellow classmates and our professors. If I was to change one thing, I would choose to be more disciplined. I wish I had developed and committed to a schedule earlier, one that dedicated more time to my studies. ■



GMAC Asia Conference

The event in Bangkok gathered education insiders from all over the world, writes **Ginn Fung**

The seventh Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) 2016 Asia Pacific Conference provided a global forum for exploring issues of critical importance to the growing Asian education landscape. The conference is designed for professionals who are responsible for school admissions, marketing, international affairs, and programme management.

The two-day event took the theme of “APAC’s Unique Advantage”. Interactive

workshops and plenary sessions featured presentations, panel discussions, the latest market research, and networking opportunities. The findings of a first global candidate segmentation study were also presented.

Ashish Bhardwaj, GMAC vice-president for Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa, said GMAC has always been dedicated to strengthening education for professionals in the business management sector. “We have held annual conferences to facilitate communications between professionals

in the field,” said Bhardwaj. “We’ve always provided the most up-to-date information about developments for students, schools and employers, and we’ve expanded the knowledge of all participants.”

The inaugural event was held in Hong Kong in 2010, and was attended by 25 delegates. More than 60 participants from 38 different schools took part in November at the Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration in Bangkok.

In one panel discussion, experts on

“Change has been swift, quality is rising, and schools in the region are making graduate management education their own”

- Rebecca Loades

admissions noted that technological prowess, investment in innovation and the strength of the financial and consulting sectors are attracting international graduates to study and work in Asia.

Rebecca Loades, GMAC director for innovation and next generation systems, pointed out that Asian business schools first appeared in the top 50 of the *Financial Times* global MBA rankings in 2005. This year 11 are included.

“Change has been swift, quality is rising, and schools in the region are making graduate management education their own,” said Loades, who questioned whether admissions processes had evolved during the same period. She spoke as part of an interactive workshop where conference delegates worked in teams to re-imagine the admissions process.

Panel discussions and workshops also covered topics like effective strategies to attract prospective students, and how to differentiate and build on Asia's unique advantages for management education.

Asian business schools may be climbing the global rankings lists, but Sangeet Chowfla, GMAC chief executive officer, said candidates have to consider their options carefully. Furthermore, they have more information at their disposal than ever before to inform their choices.

He said business schools are looking for new ways to meet demand. These include online courses and international campuses to attract the right mix of candidates to build diverse programme cohorts.

Chowfla also noted that, while business schools in Asia are developing rapidly and gaining in international recognition, policy changes resulting from the Brexit vote and the US election are causing some individuals to look at other study destinations.

“We now recognise that selection has become a two-way process. Business schools will continue to reach out and select candidates. But candidates are increasingly making difficult selection decisions of their own, reaching across programme types and geographical boundaries,” said Chowfla.

In line with GMAC's mission to provide solutions for business schools and candidates to discover and evaluate each other, Chowfla said the Council had recently launched a Global Segmentation Survey to positively influence the way business schools identify, target and meet the needs of prospective students.

“The objective of this study was to help drive industry growth through actionable insights on the motivations of those in the candidate pipeline,” said Chowfla.

The study will also help to guide schools'



Sangeet
Chowfla



The conference, hosted by GMAC with the Sasri Graduate Institute of Business Administration of Chulalongkorn University, attracted over 60 leaders, scholars and executives of top business schools.

strategy, programme development, and marketing efforts.

The study interviewed nearly 6,000 respondents from 15 countries. It analysed why they were pursuing a further degree, and looked at the process used to select particular business schools.

GMAC also recently launched a collaboration with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD).

Chowfla said these are the world's two largest business education networks connecting academia with business. "Together, we will promote and enhance our research activities for the benefit of the business education industry," he said. The three global organisations will increase information sharing and co-ordination.

Research-based initiatives will also enable comprehensive analysis and reporting, and will expand the collective understanding of schools involved in global graduate

management education.

Chowfla also noted the importance employers place on business education. According to the 2015 and 2016 GMAC corporate recruiters survey, the focus for employers is on finding candidates who fit with their corporate culture and organisational needs.

Therefore, business schools need to understand what motivates students and employers. "Academic and professional preferences are evolving, driving a change in the learning dynamic," Chowfla said.

He added that while Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) exams are not the only criteria for admission, it remains a strong predictor for how a candidate will do once enrolled.

Indeed, a recent study from *US News & World Report* showed that nearly nine out of 10 enrolments for the Top 100 US full-time MBA programmes were made using GMAT scores. ■

“We will promote and enhance our research activities for the benefit of the business education industry”

- Sangeet Chowfla