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 **South China Morning Post****Business schools put accent on fintech and entrepreneurship**

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News › Hong Kong › Education

Chris Davis*Opportunities range from courses on fintech and big data analytics to social entrepreneurship*

Business schools are focusing on financial technology, or fintech, and entrepreneurship to help MBA students apply new skills. This comes as fintech innovations continue to disrupt long-standing financial structures and change the way that traditional financial instruments are used.

Professor Chen Tai-yuan, associate dean (MBA Programs), at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) business school, has noticed MBA students taking a greater interest in the entrepreneurial space. He says this has led to students favouring a combination of a “traditional” MBA programme that incorporates fintech, digital marketing and big data courses. “These are topics that MBA students are looking to gain insights into,” Chen says. “It reflects the change in the current business market place where disruptive technologies are fast becoming the norm.”

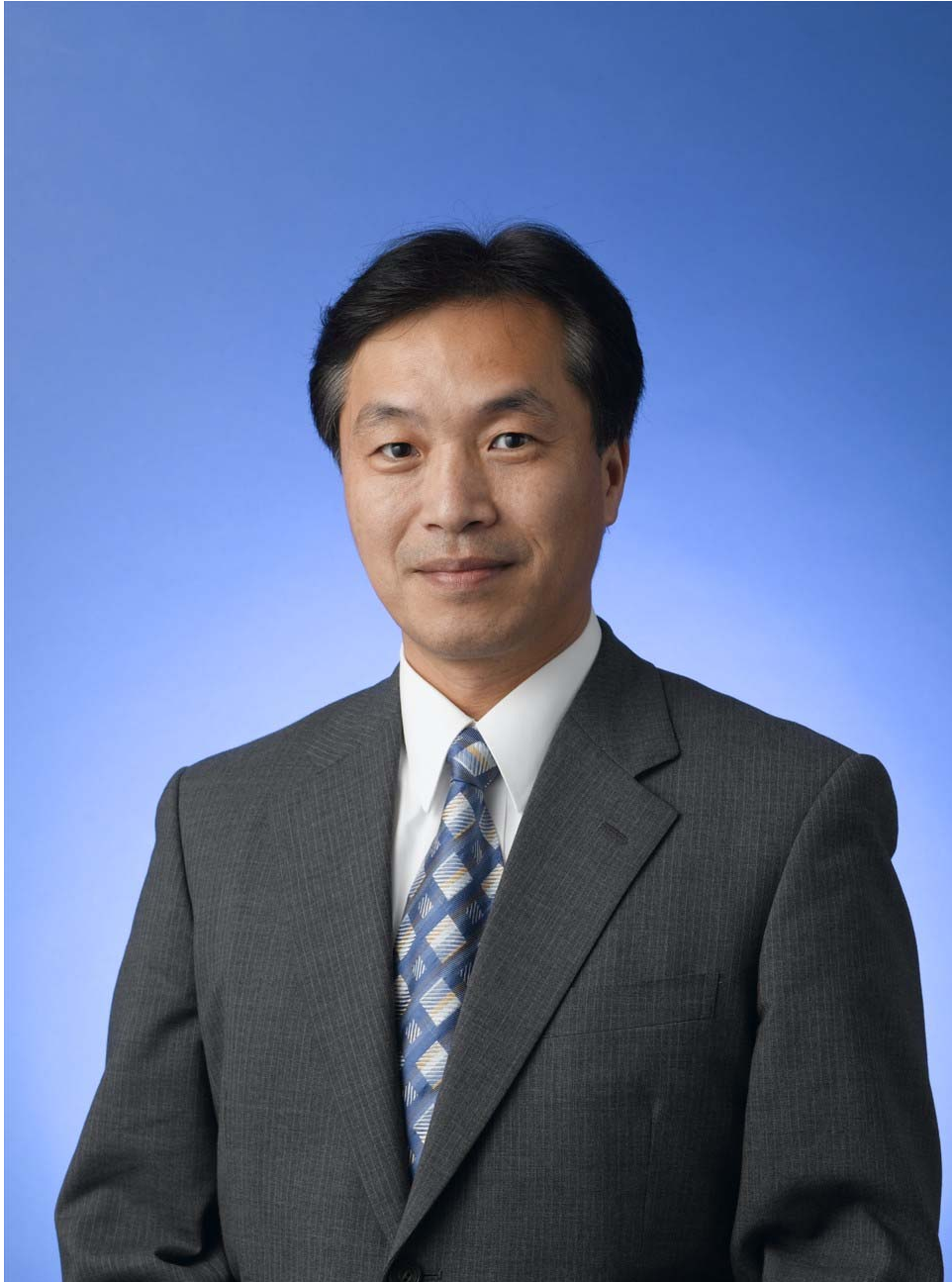
According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Hong Kong and Shenzhen Report 2016/17, the growth of start-up businesses in the two jurisdictions more than doubled from 2009 to 2016. In mid-2016, early-stage entrepreneurial activity among Hong Kong’s population was estimated to be about 9.4 per cent (3.64 per cent in 2009) and 16 per cent (4.8 per cent in 2009) in Shenzhen. A shift towards entrepreneurial intentions indicates that nearly 60 per cent of Hong Kong’s population have a positive view of start-up opportunities in Hong Kong.

To ensure students are one step ahead, Chen says the business school’s MBA curriculum reflects an increase in the offering of technology disruptive-focused courses, and the business school is strengthening its ties in fintech. In November, the business school and HKUST Entrepreneurship Center jointly hosted the first 24-hour HKUST fintech Hackathon that brought together teams of students and alumni from Hong Kong’s public universities who presented their ideas to technology industry leaders.

Chen says MBA students can build on technology-related learning opportunities offered through the business school. Recent opportunities have ranged from courses on fintech and big data analytics to social entrepreneurship, where students came up with a business plan and “pitched” to a panel of experts.

Recognising that busy professionals need to manage their time carefully, Chen says the business school has structured its part-time MBA programmes to be delivered weekly and bi-weekly. The weekly MBA for Professionals (MBAP) takes place every Saturday in the first year of study, with electives offered on weekday evenings and weekends. The bi-weekly MBAP is offered on alternate weekends with about 40 per cent of the courses conducted at HKUST Shenzhen campus. Electives are offered bi-weekly, but students are able to attend weekly electives if they prefer. “We take great pride in delivering a ‘full-time MBA experience’ offered on a part-time format,” Chen says. With over 100 academic courses to choose from during their MBA academic studies, programmes are robust, rigorous and adaptive, and meet the needs of career-oriented students.

Chen says workshops that hone students' professional development, and international exposure via exchange programmes and study tours, provide students with the insights they need to think creatively and become inspirational managers and leaders.



Designed to develop the skills needed in a fast-moving business environment, Shige Makino, professor at the department of management at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) business school, says the new one-year, full-time, master in management (MiM) programme, for which he is co-director, aims to help students succeed in a rapidly evolving digital age. "The MiM programme will help students make sense of the implications and deeper meaning of the digital and technology buzzwords that are constantly being used," Makino says.

Candidates for the programme should hold a bachelor's degree in any discipline. Fresh or recent graduates with limited business experience are eligible. "We are looking for people who have good leadership potential. That can be assessed in a variety of ways – academic performance is just one of them. We place importance on face-to-face interviews.

We want to assess the person as a whole."

In addition to core courses that include corporate finance, financial and managerial accounting, and strategic consumer insights, electives offered cover business model canvas for the digital economy, business analytics and digital innovation, digital marketing, fintech analytics, emerging technology and business innovation, and entrepreneurship and strategic renewal.

"The programme reflects the changes taking place in industry and society," Makino says. "We believe the programme is being launched at the right time to allow our students to capture the opportunities that are being created," he adds. The MiM's courses cover some of the most challenging topics industries face and those that are likely to become more prominent in the future.

Makino says those who would be ideal candidates for the MiM programme are aware of the inevitable growth of digital technologies,



The MiM programme will help students make sense of the implications and

but are looking for ways to harness opportunities the new digital environment can offer. "I believe our programme will inspire our students to achieve the creativity, flexibility and problem-solving skills they need to prosper in a digitally driven environment, where opportunities exist for those who know how to identify them."

The MiM programme includes regular visits to companies pioneering the use of technology and cutting-edge management and operations processes where students are able to engage with senior managers, executives and entrepreneurs. Makino says one of the highlights of the programme is the capstone project, which involves students travelling internationally to emerging economies where they work on live consulting projects and tackle real problems faced by firms.

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Shige Makino

With fintech, AI and entrepreneurship and innovation hot topics across the business community, Stephanie Villemagne, associate dean of graduate programmes and director of MBA Programs, at CUHK's business school, says its MBA curriculum will offer two concentration options in the coming year that will focus on finance and technology, and entrepreneurship and innovation. Villemagne explains that students will be able to pursue a general MBA degree or an MBA degree with finance and technology, entrepreneurship and innovation as a concentration option.

To provide robustness and rigour, Villemagne says the business school offers comprehensive entrepreneurship programmes to nurture students' creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial mindset. "Our courses are very practical because they feature real-life cases," Villemagne says.

Offered on a part-time basis, the MBA programme consists of core and elective courses and normally takes 24 months to complete. Villemagne says the MBA programme is reflective, aimed at candidates with at least two or three years of work experience, who are looking for career advancement, or a change in direction. In addition to the interactive classroom sessions and opportunities to network, CUHK's MBA includes business field studies to emerging markets such as Zambia and Chile.

The goal is to enable students to be exposed to a wide spectrum of global business influences in relation to trade, economics, finance, ventures, management and leadership practices.

Meanwhile, the launch of the part-time corporate compliance postgraduate diploma and the enterprise risk management postgraduate diploma programmes by the Hong Kong University School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE), will cover key issues relevant to Hong Kong's and the wider corporate compliance and enterprise risk landscape, according to Dr Olivia Lui, HKU SPACE senior programme director. "The programmes have been structured so they are relevant and will be regularly reviewed."

Focusing on practical applications and all-round training in corporate compliance, the corporate compliance diploma programme incorporates real-life examples of cases including rules and issues, highlighting grey areas of corporate compliance, which will be discussed during classroom sessions. "With demand for people with corporate compliance knowledge and skills on the rise, the objectives of the programme are to equip students with skills and knowledge to analyse and interpret relevant listing rules, Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) regulations and financial standards," Lui says.

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