Partners bring best of east and west

Leading British, American and Hong Kong schools join forces to offer unrivalled global degree programme for senior executives

With the launch of the groundbreaking EMBA-Global Asia programme, three of the world's top business schools have come together to offer an executive education course that promises to be unsurpassed in terms of scope, quality and the opportunities it creates.

The partnership between Columbia Business School in New York, London Business School and the HKU Business School, at The University of Hong Kong, will guarantee the highest standards of academic excellence, giving students an unrivalled understanding of the workings of the global economy, and the business theory and practices of both east and west.

With classes and seminars conducted in New York, London and Hong Kong, the three cities now generally recognised as the world's premier financial capitals, programme participants will benefit in countless ways and on numerous levels. Their professors will be world-renowned faculty members at three highly regarded institutions; they will associate with fellow students from diverse industries and from around the world; and they will have the chance to meet and learn from some of the leading lights of the local business community in each location.

In a unique arrangement, graduates will become alumni of all three universities, meaning that they will not only receive world-class management training, but will also have access to an active and extensive alumni network quite unlike any other.

"There really is no other programme like this," said Professor Gary Biddle, Dean of the University of Hong Kong's Faculty of Business and Economics. "It is a new world-spanning EMBA which tops all the rest."

He added it had taken hard work, dedication and expertise to bring the project to fruition. However, as the three schools were already co-operating successfully on a full-time MBA programme, it seemed a logical next step.

Columbia Business School and the London Business School were both keen to add to their existing EMBA-Global Americas and Europe in order to reflect the ever-increasing role of Asia in the global economy. And HKU saw the importance of providing an executive education course with a truly international perspective, which allowed students primarily from the Asia-Pacific region, to acquire practical knowledge, accelerate their careers and enhance their long-term leadership potential.

"There is a richly talented pool of students in Asia looking for just this type of opportunity," said Ethan Hanabury, associate dean for executive MBA programmes at Columbia Business School. "Hong Kong is a natural choice of location because it is the entrepreneurial hub of Asia and well connected to other financial capitals around the world."

He also mentioned that HKU was an obvious partner for such a venture, citing its international reputation, robust academic programmes and English-based curriculum.

"It is very exciting for Columbia Business School," Mr Hanabury said. "We had been interested for some time in launching a degree in Asia and can now bring our acclaimed joint programme to high-potential, globally focused professionals in the region."

Among the obvious advantages, he said, were the peer exchange and experience sharing that would result from studying alongside other high-calibre executives. One could add to that the chance to make an immediate impact back in the workplace by putting newly gained knowledge into practice.

"With all this, we look forward to becoming the leader in business education in Asia," Mr Hanabury said.

At an introductory event, Anne Sandford, the programme director for Sloan and executive MBA programmes at the London Business School, noted the significance of offering a top-rated course in the world's three acknowledged financial capitals. As a result, she said, the school was "absolutely delighted" to be extending its partnership to offer a level of business education and networking opportunities that had no rival.

"With core courses taught by the three institutions in London, Hong Kong and New York, we are providing a rigorous and innovative curriculum examining the changing world of international business in three of the world's most dynamic and influential cities," Ms Sandford said. "And the study opportunities in locations, such as Shanghai, Dubai, South America and India, mean this is a truly global educational experience."

In the classroom, faculty members and invited guest speakers will be able to give genuinely cutting-edge insights. Along the way, they will also explain the intricacies of management theory and organisational behaviour in different contexts, thereby helping to create a bridge between east and west.

Ms Sandford added that the first intake would begin classes in May 2009. Registration and enrolment will start in September and fees for the 20-month course amount to US$120,000. This covers tuition, study materials, accommodation, and meals on campus, and is within the same range as other EMBAs. Understandably, airfares are not included.

Applications can be made in September. "We are looking for fast-track business executives from around the region who probably have at least 10 years' work experience."

Noting that the mainland alone would need an estimated 80,000 extra globally trained executives to keep pace with economic developments, Professor Biddle pointed out that people with the right background and experience would be in great demand. Major mainland organisations were looking to branch out overseas, while international companies were still pushing to expand in China.

"There is an incredible shortage of globally savvy executives to run companies evolving in China, and this also applies to the rest of the world," he said. "Nowadays, organisations of any size operate across borders, so it is important for senior executives and rising stars to understand the global perspective. In that respect, no other programme can match this one."

He said bringing together the proven excellence of an existing top-ranked EMBA with the Asia component, provided by HKU's prominent position and regional knowledge, was adding strength to strength. "It is a lifetime benefit in so many ways. With all these networking opportunities from the three faculties combined, nothing else can come close. People talk about enabling Hong Kong to realise its potential as an executive education hub for Asia, but we are really doing it."

Peter Fong, left, Director of EMBA and Executive Programmes, and Gary Biddle, Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics. Photo: Warton Li

The launch of the EMBA-Global Asia programme.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- Completed online application
- Current CV
- Two essays and a personal statement
- Academic transcripts
- GMAT
- Letter of support from your employer
- TOEFL or IELTS (if necessary)
- Two references
- US$200 application fee

Course is a great way to network

Getting ahead in the business world and achieving your full career potential can depend on whom you know as much as on what you know. Rising executives with an eye to advancement appreciate any chance that comes their way to widen their circle of contacts, both in their own sector or industry, across the full spectrum of international business.

One of the major benefits of the EMBA-Global Asia programme is that it will allow them to do just that. In the course of the programme, participants will meet and study alongside middle and senior managers from leading organisations in Hong Kong and around the region, many of them no doubt destined to reach the very top in their respective fields.

During overseas modules and international assignments, Hong Kong-enrolled students will meet their direct counterparts at Columbia Business School (CBS) and London Business School (LBS), and distinguished professors and notable guest speakers. The resulting exchanges of ideas and information will not only offer new and contrasting perspectives, but also lay the foundations for a truly global network of friends and personal contacts.

Gary Biddle, Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics at The University of Hong Kong (HKU), said participants would inevitably learn an enormous amount from each other. Classmates would remain close friends with people with whom they could share problems, seek advice and discuss career moves. "This is such a powerful advantage when you have executive friends in many different institutions," he said.

Just as significantly, though, graduates of the EMBA-Global Asia programme will also become alumni of all three universities. This will give them access to a veritable who's who of alumni and offer them unequalled opportunities to make new acquaintances and build a network that stretches around the world.

"They will be part of a network with chapters which are active in all the main regional business centres," said Peter Fong, director of EMBA and executive programmes at the HKU.

"Of course, it is inter-generational, so there are regular opportunities to meet other alumni from all the different years."

Activities include seminars, speaker luncheons, forums and social events organised by one or other of the three schools. To illustrate the range of potential contacts, Dr Fong said HKU now had close to 2,000 MBA and IMBA alumni in Shanghai alone, and many of them would come together this year at events to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the university's teaching presence in Shanghai. Future EMBA graduates will be welcome to attend such events, if in town on a business trip or for a short-term stay, and the same applies for alumni events organised by HKU, CBS and LBS in cities around the world.

This is also an excellent opportunity to stay in touch with the latest thinking of scholars; researchers and those practising new techniques and methodologies, which is a key factor in maintaining competitiveness.

"What it means is that, no matter where your career takes you, you will find alumni activities that keep you on the cutting edge for life and expose you to change," Professor Biddle said.

"You are adding together the best of the three schools' networks. That is something very valuable and there is nothing to match it."

Premier facility a 'crown jewel'

Executives who join the EMBA-Global Asia programme will be studying at the new state-of-the-art HKU Cyberport campus on the southern side of Hong Kong Island, which will be up and running by early 2009.

The HKU Business School will occupy about 40,000 sq ft in a low-rise complex in the Cyberport 4 development, purpose-built for executive education and incorporating the latest systems and technology.

"This is a premier facility designed for the premier business course," said Gary Biddle, Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics at The University of Hong Kong. "We looked at the best in the world and bettered it. This building is really a crown jewel."

The facilities will include two tiered classrooms and four others with a more standard layout. There will be 16 breakout rooms for smaller group discussions and project work, and two executive lounges for private study or dining.

Each classroom and meeting room will have high-quality acoustics, and ergonomically designed and IT-friendly furniture with retractable power connections.

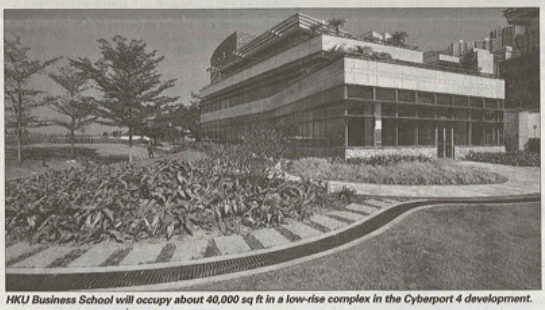
In keeping with the hi-tech nature of the Cyberport development, there will be wireless-enabled projectors and screens, and touch panel controls for the audio-video systems, lighting and video conferencing equipment.

Free Wi-fi access will be available everywhere on campus, with data throughput speeds of up to 12 gigabits per second (Gbps) for local links and 2.3 Gbps for international connections. And, for executives who need to keep an eye on market moves or the latest headlines, there will be high-definition plasma TVs relaying international news broadcasts and financial bulletins in the main public areas.

Programme participants travelling from overseas will find that the campus offers fast and easy access from Hong Kong International Airport and the rest of the city.

When in residence, arrangements have been made for them to stay at the five-star Le Meridien Cyberport Hotel, located just a few steps away from the main classroom complex. All the rooms are equipped with whatever could be expected in terms of comfort, convenience and hi-tech amenities.

"The benefits are clear, and everything is just perfect for executive education," Professor Biddle said.



HKU Business School will occupy about 40,000 sq ft in a low-rise complex in the Cyberport 4 development.

Programme with an international perspective

High-flying executives habitually look for challenges and experiences that can take them to the next level and, with the EMBA-Global Asia programme, that is exactly what they will get.

It consists of 12 core courses followed by eight electives, offering students the chance to strengthen their understanding of essential business skills and practices. They will also gain exciting new perspectives on the management techniques, priorities and financial forces that drive corporate decision-making and shape the direction of today's global economy.

The curriculum is based on the EMBA-Global Americas and Europe programme, run with great success by Columbia Business School (CBS) and London Business School (LBS) for the past seven years.

Consistently ranked as one of the world's top business courses, it has been noted for its academic rigour, relevance, project-based work and collaborative nature.

These qualities will underpin the EMBA-Global Asia, which is seen as a logical extension of the existing programme. But there will also be something extra. The co-operation with the HKU Business School will allow for greater focus on viewpoints, information and imperatives relevant to doing business in various

Asian countries, and will therefore meet the specific needs of executives intent on learning what it takes to lead an enterprise and successfully manage change in the Asia-Pacific context.

Peter Fong, Director of EMBA and Executive Programmes for the Faculty of Business and Economics at HKU, explained that each of the 12 core modules would take four or five days. There will usually be one module per month, scheduled to last from Wednesday or Thursday to Sunday, with the intention of minimising participants' time away from the office.

Each module involves classroom teaching, interactive discussions and group work. Total class size is expected to be about 50 but separate study groups of six to eight students, from diverse backgrounds and different industries, will also work together on projects, case studies and real-life situations – a sure-fire way of sparking debate, stimulating ideas and keeping things up to date.

"One of the benefits is that students can bring up their own companies' problems and invite others to contribute and exchange ideas," Dr Fong said.

He likened this to being able to enjoy a "free" consultancy because, besides the highly regarded faculty members, many of those taking the course would also be experts in their respective fields.

During the initial 12 months, the various core modules may be taught in Hong Kong, Shanghai, New York or London. If necessary, one or two days are set aside for general familiarisation when students travel to a different city for the first time. This ensures that they get the absolute maximum from the international aspect of the course, working alongside students from CBS or LBS, visiting major organisations and meeting industry pioneers.

This is emphasised even more when they move on to their electives. Generally, these extend over the succeeding eight months, making the programme 20 months in total, but there is also a fast-track option to "double up" on electives and complete everything in 16 months.

Students can choose their electives from those offered by CBS, LBS or HKU, giving an unrivalled selection. Those offered in Hong Kong, reflecting local strengths in research and specific areas of academic expertise, will include brand management, doing business on the mainland, cross-cultural management and behavioural economics and decision making.

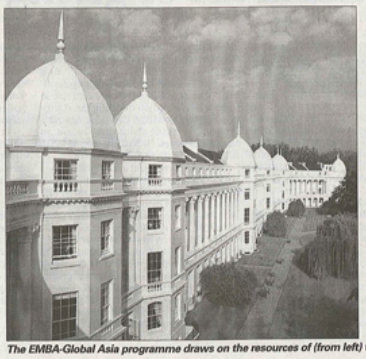
"The list goes on forever," said Gary Biddle, Dean of HKU's Faculty of Business and Economics. "Most EMBA courses are in lock-step, but here there is a big choice and an enormous amount of flexibility."

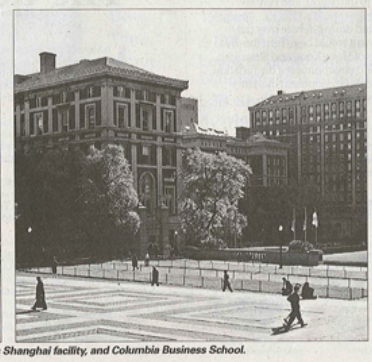
Professor Biddle added that taking certain options even made it possible to study or complete international assignments in locations as diverse as Ukraine, Germany, South America, South Africa, India and China. One or other of the participating schools had affiliated programmes in each of those countries, further extending the opportunities for international exposure.

"For learning, there is nothing like being there," he said. "You get actual on-the-ground experience, for example, in Kiev, Sao Paulo or Dubai."

"When you get into the electives, you really can customise to your liking; other programmes don't have that flexibility," said Ethan Hanabury, Associate Dean of EMBA programmes at Columbia Business School.

"What's beautiful about this is that, at the beginning, you are in a cohort with people from basically the same geography, but we are opening up an opportunity for students from Asia to take advantage of a great international education."





The EMBA-Global Asia programme draws on the resources of (from left) the London Business School, HKU's Shanghai facility, and Columbia Business School.

EMBA-Global Asia core courses

- Corporate finance
- Decision models
- Executive leadership
- Financial accounting
- International macroeconomics
- Leading and managing in organisations
- Managerial accounting
- Managerial economics
- Managerial statistics
- Marketing strategy
- Operations management
- Strategic management in Asia