



MBA Interview with HKUST (香港科技大学)

Interviewee: Mr Chris Tsang
Associate Director (Postgraduate Programs)
HKUST Business School

(1) What's special about your MBA program? For example, you emphasize on leadership or innovation or whatever?

The key goal of our MBA program is to develop global business leaders with Asia expertise for the world. We believe having a global vision is the distinguishing trait of such leaders. So here at HKUST we offer students a global learning experience for them to excel in management roles in business no matter where they will be in this age of globalization.

We recruit students from a worldwide network every year to provide a global learning experience. Our students represent 25 nationalities with over 90% non-local nationalities. Our faculty also reflects similar diversity with only 15% local members. More than half of the professors hail from North America, Europe, Korea and Japan among other overseas countries. We also have an extensive network of international business schools for our guaranteed exchange program. They can choose to go to top business schools such as London Business School, Columbia Business School, Chicago Booth, New York University, Kellogg Business School among the list of 56 exchange partners spanning across the world.

Our curriculum has a heavy focus on Asia, using a lot of Asian cases to build up students' knowledge of the regional business. Some examples are "Cathay Pacific: IT Outsourcing", "Hong Kong Jockey Club", "Singapore Airline" and "Toyota Motor Manufacturing". Many of our graduates were employed by MNCs in Asia, such as LVMH, NTT Com Asia, Microsoft, Morgan Stanley Asia, Standard Chartered Bank among others.

(2) What's special about your MBA program in terms of specific areas of academic strength? For example, marketing and in what sub areas of marketing that your program is really good at or known for?

Our MBA curriculum offer a professional business education in 5 career tracks including management, finance, consulting, entrepreneurship and marketing. Because of our strategic location in HK, our finance track is often perceived to be our key strength. Also, the research of our Finance department has been consistently ranked No. 1 in the Asia-Pacific region. Another leading strength of our program is Asia business. We have a team of business veterans with extensive professional experience in this area to impart their firsthand knowledge and recipes of success to students.

Still, we proud ourselves on our well-rounded business education because we believe the best leaders are not only experts in their own fields but also well versed in other areas related to business. Our faculty comprises both academics and industry leaders to offer a wealth of business knowledge and experience to students.

(3) Specifically, in what areas do you place the most MBA graduates? We'd love to know as details as possible. For example, in investment banking or manufacturing, what specific areas or companies do you place the most students?

In general, around 50% of our graduates get recruited into finance/investment industry, followed by 10% to 15% in consumer goods/ marketing and consulting/professional services respectively. In terms of job function, around 30% are employed as financial analyst/ associate and general management roles respectively. Geographically speaking, 75% of the graduating class works in Hong Kong and overseas.

Companies that have hired graduates are mostly banks, MNCs and consulting firms such as Bank of America, Citibank, HSBC, JP Morgan, Merrill Lynch, Intel, Nike, DuPont, PepsiCo, Microsoft, Accenture, Bearing Point, etc.

(4) Is there any new development of your program in the past 2-3 years? Why did you make such change? What's the specific impact on your students?

The career track electives are a new element that we incorporated into our program one year ago. With the rich diversity in their academic, professional and cultural backgrounds, students come to our MBA with different needs. But they share the same ultimate goal - to build a shining career. An elective structure in terms of career tracks ensures a seamless connection between their studies and career, allowing them to specialize in subjects that matter most to their future, whether in career advancement or a new career direction.

Responsible leadership and ethics is also a new feature of our curriculum. More than ever, the world today needs responsible business leaders. Only with a strong moral compass could business leaders bring long-term benefits to their companies and society as a whole. As Asia's leading business educator, our school has always been committed to developing responsible leaders here in Asia for the world who can operate to the highest global standards.

(5) Do you have some Chinese students in your program? What's your general impression on Chinese students, such as what did well and what they need to improve? If you can share with us some live stories which impressed you or embarrassed you, that would be cool.

Some of the students are from China in our program. Though there are always exceptions, generally speaking, Chinese students tend to think thoroughly before talking and they are less willing to share. So usually they talk less frequently than others, especially western students in class, but their words are often more sensible and to the point.

Chinese students are also more detail-oriented. They are more sensitive to small differences and are more likely to ask questions that are very specific or precise. Influenced by their culture, Chinese students are more concerned about 'saving face' (maintaining a good self image) for themselves and for others, and are more considerate of others' feelings. For example, they tend to wait for others to finish their sentences before voicing their own opinions and as such are perceived as less aggressive in comparison.



In all, Chinese students can tell the others what they think more often. Good ideas would mean little if these thoughts are not known by others. Excellent business leaders are often good speakers who can share their vision and thoughts with others.

(6) A lot of Chinese potential MBA applicants worry about how to finance their study. Do you school provide financial aid to admitted students? What is the policy or resources your school has to assist the admitted students financially?

We offer the merit scholarship to the top 10-20 % of admitted candidates in their class. Each award is worth HKD50,000. Need based grant are available for students based on merit and need. The amount ranges from HKD25,000 to HKD150,000. Full-time students who are permanent residents in China are also eligible for the Jebesen Scholarship at HKD100,000 for each award.

(7) Is there anything, beyond what we have mentioned above, that you feel really proud of about your MBA program, such as your location, faculty, alumni, scenery or else?

We are very proud of our global recognition on our program. This year, our MBA is ranked world no. 9 by Financial Times MBA Ranking 2010, which is one of the most trusted MBA ranking sources around the world. Such recognition bodes well for our current and future students, and for our alumni as other schools and recruiters will have instant confidence in the quality of their MBA.

An important factor which gives rise to our international reputation as a top business school is the quality of our faculty. We have assembled an elite team of faculty with cutting edge research and exceptional industry experience. Each is committed to inspire students with their innovative ideas and experience based insights. For academics, we have professors like Prof Danyan Xie, the former Senior Economist for the International Monetary Fund, and Prof Milind Rao, a contributor to The Wall Street Journal, The Economic Times, among others. For industry leaders, we have Prof Ron McEachern, former President of PepsiCo Asia, and Prof Cassian Cheung, former President of Wal-Mart China among others.

(Over)