



East Asia Alumni UK Symposium 2025

Key Takeways Report

7 March 2025
Hong Kong

#EAEducationWeek

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THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

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Event overview

The UK Alumni Symposium, themed ‘Shaping your future’, was designed to inspire, foster meaningful dialogue and encourage collective action by alumni, entrepreneurs, employers, educators and stakeholders to address the personal, professional, regional and global challenges that a rapidly changing world poses for the future.

The Alumni Symposium took place on 7 March 2025 at the University of Hong Kong, bringing together over 280 UK alumni from 14 countries and territories. This marked the first-ever regional Alumni Symposium held in East Asia.



Key takeaways

Global volatility demands more engagement

The geopolitical and global trade landscape is much more complicated than at any time in the last two years. How Asia interacts with the rest of the world is a marker for future opportunities. What happens with China and its response to trade tariffs and tense geopolitical relationships has huge implications for everyone. Current friction is between politicians and governments and so engagement between people at the micro-level is crucially important in stabilising relationships.

Opportunity lies in innovative cooperation

At this point in human history, however, the world is probably the most interconnected that it has ever been in terms of openness to things that are unfamiliar. People are willing to embrace the unfamiliar and to consider things outside their comfort zones. But this needs to be strategised, with collaboration and innovative thinking about how to overcome barriers.

The future we need to see

This is a pivotal moment in human history, but our ability to shape the future is limited by how we see things. Algorithms and modern technology increasingly allow us to see only what is within our own frame of reference and few people try to see things beyond their own 'sphere'. The challenge for humanity is that the 'gap' between what we see and what we need to see is growing. Within that 'gap' lie all of humanity's biggest risks and opportunities. It is through seeing collective perspectives and working together that we all hold the power to shape the future.

The talent toolkit

There will be more jobs in the future that demand technology, 'big data', materials science and engineering skills. In addition, jobs that support an ageing population will be needed. Talent will be recategorised as a package of skills and technical competence but also the willingness to learn new things. Specialist knowledge and the agility to question, to research, understand emotional responses to change and the ability to collaborate will be needed. Greater resilience will be required of people faced with ambiguity and continual change.

Entrepreneurial resilience

Entrepreneurs need to build resilience and be comfortable with change, especially as funding becomes harder to obtain. Innovation will be required to disrupt the status quo and to carve out new ways of doing business. Entrepreneurs will need to unlearn and relearn new techniques and skills. Social entrepreneurship will grow as people look to reassess how a business can bring returns but also contribute to society and the wider world.

Entrepreneurs and businesses will always face new challenges that may at first seem overwhelming. Developing the right mindsets and habits to face challenges without fear are possible, meaning that whatever the future holds will be manageable. Resilience and agility are at the core of human ability to survive against the odds.

The vital role of alumni

The role of alumni is critical to making meaningful and sustainable relationships and networks with others, to help universities and society bring new generations, industries and ages into education, enterprise and partnerships.

The UK teaches people how to think and not what to think and it is this that makes a UK higher education so relevant to the need to always be learning in the face of risks and to see opportunities ahead.

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[Becoming an entrepreneur] is not a conscious act, it should flow into you, a natural evolution towards something you want to do. You obviously need to make an effort... but being an entrepreneur is not something you just say you want to be today.

Yijing Wang, Founder 2060 Advisory

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I think what you've heard today demonstrates what UK education means - that a UK education teaches you how to think and not what to think. And because you know and continuously know how to apply your knowledge and skills, you can continuously improve and you never stop learning.

Jazreel Goh, Country Director, British Council Malaysia

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It's not about the destination and it's not about the journey; it's about the person you become on the way.

Rob Lilwall, Nat Geo TV Adventurer and Resilience Expert

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Having a role model will literally instil the belief system that... we can do it. As a fresh graduate, we have all those questions: Am I going to make it? Can I actually do it? And then you see that someone did succeed. That is like petrol inside all of us.

Alia, UK alumna and British Council Women in STEM Scholar

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The fastest way that I know to help you see how you see the future is to show you how everyone else sees it... the technologists, the environmentalists, the politicians, the philosophers... so that by seeing all of their blind spots, you can transcend them.

Dr Chris Kutana, Political scientist, TED Speaker and author of Age of Discovery



Appendix

Programme

Time	Activity	Speaker
09:30 – 11:30	Business Site Visits - Invest HK - The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited - West Kowloon Cultural District	
11:00 – 12:30	Lunch	
12:00 – 13:00	Registration and networking	
13:00 – 13:15	Opening and welcome remarks	Leighton Ernsberger , Regional Education Director, British Council
13:15 – 13:30	Opening keynote: Age of Discovery	Dr Chris Kurtana , Distinguished author, political scientist, TED speaker, and author of the international bestseller Age of Discovery
13:30 – 14:15	Regional Strategic Forecast	Nick Marro , Principal Economist for Asia and Lead for Global Trade, Economist Intelligence Unit
14:15 – 15:15	Panel Discussion: Future of Work – Trends and Predictions	Panellists: Dato' Kathleen Chew Wai Lin , Group Legal Counsel, YTL Corporation Berhad Adrienne Lee , Director of Insights, Planning and Strategy, Starbucks Asia Pacific Paul McComb , Executive Director, The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong Haslam Preston , Chief People and Culture Officer, Capitaland Investment Limited Jeremy Sargent , OBE, Partner, JS Associates Guangzhou Office; Chairman Emeritus of the British Chamber South China Moderator: Jazreel Goh , Country Director, British Council Malaysia
15:15 – 15:45	Coffee Break	

15:45 – 16:30	Panel Discussion: Unleashing Entrepreneurial Potential: Navigating Opportunities and Overcoming Challenges	Panellists: Dinh Thuy Phuong , CEO, Bio-Advances JSC Krizia Li , Founder , Vermillion Lifestyle and Head of SCMP Learn, South China Morning Post Zaim Mohzani , Co-Founder, Nation Building School and Regional Coordinator, Chevening Alumni Southeast Asian Network (CASEAN) Jirayut (Topp) Srupsrisopa , Founder and Group CEO, Bitkub Group Yijing Wang , Founder , 2060 Advisory Ahmad Subarkah Yuniarto , Executive Coach, Founding Chairman Biru Peduli Foundation Geothermal Energy Moderator: Jeremy Sargent , OBE, Partner, JS Associates Guangzhou Office; Chairman Emeritus of the British Chamber South China
16:30 – 17:15	Panel Discussion: Amplifying Impact: Leveraging Alumni Networks for Personal and Institutional Advancement	Panellists: Jee Kwan Ng , Vice-President, Imperial College London Alumni Association of Malaysia (ICAAM), Region Manager APAC, Petromac Ltd. Prof Nguyen Khanh Dieu Hong , Principal of TH Schools and the CEO of the non-profit Go-Green Vietnam Foundation Michael Chi On Wong , Board Member, Oxford University Alumni Board Ryan Chong-Geng Xi , President of the University of Cambridge Alumni Society of Guangdong Moderator: Catriona Mccarthy , Global Head, Student Mobility and Internationalisation of UK Education, British Council
17:15 – 18:00	Closing keynote: Adaptability and Resilience	Rob Lilwall , Nat Geo TV Adventurer and Resilience Expert
18:00 – 18:30	Closing	Catriona Mccarthy , Global Head, Student Mobility and Internationalisation of UK Education, British Council

