

## EVENTS WATCH

# MBS alumni events add continuing value for MBA graduates

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The aim of an MBA is to give new perspectives on the world of business and the skills to plan and manage more effectively. But besides those major benefits, many students find that one of the greatest lasting gains is the network of friends and contacts the course provides and the chance to keep widening that circle through membership of an alumni association.

One of the most active such groups is the Manchester Business School Alumni Association (China), whose annual dinner held in late October marked both the school's 21st anniversary in Asia and nine years since the setting up of the association's Hong Kong regional committee.

The dinner, with guest of honour Ir Dr Raymond Ho Chung-tai, distinguished faculty members visiting from Manchester and more than 140 locally-based and overseas alumni from Japan, Singapore, UK, etc., in attendance, was an occasion to celebrate these achievements, but also to have some fun with a dance competition, performances and award presentations.

Besides that, it was a chance to highlight how fast the school is growing internationally. It now has offices in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore, as well as Dubai, Miami and Brazil. There are more than 50,000 alumni spread across 169 countries. And the range of events and activities is increasing all the time.

"We are already among the largest alumni groups based in Hong Kong and our theme for the coming year is 'build, grow, network,'" says William Chan, chairman of the Manchester Business School (MBS) Alumni Association

(China), which was established in 2005. “We want to strengthen links between alumni and with the school through a range of activities which give the opportunity to meet new people, share ideas and experiences, and given something back to the community.”

Lisa O’Connor, the incoming vice chairlady of the MBS Alumni Association, who completed the [MBA programme](#) this year, adds that the range of activities is already extensive and will continue to grow. As a result, members can find what suits them best, but also have the scope to get involved in all kinds of new events and initiatives.

Their initial priority might be to keep in touch with peers and tap into the expertise of professionals working in other industries. Alternatively, it might be to explore business opportunities with a group of like-minded entrepreneurs and compare notes on how best to tackle unexpected challenges or tough management dilemmas.

Beyond that, though, there is the chance to simply socialise – at the annual dinner, a wine-tasting evening, a session to learn about coffee, or perhaps competing in a fancy-dress charity race to raise funds for a good cause.



Cocktail reception at the annual dinner 2013 of Manchester Business School Alumni Association (China).

“I like being able to bounce ideas around and to know there are people I can turn to for good advice,” says O’Connor, who works for Standard Chartered Bank in Hong Kong in the client coverage team as a director for RMB solutions. “But I also like the social aspects and the fact that there is always something fun to look forward to.”

Recent months have seen popular business-themed talks on subjects like the current job market and effective negotiating skills. There have also been cross-border trips to visit factories in China and meet up with alumni based in the mainland.

Looking ahead, the plan for the next year or so is to maintain a good balance between educational and fun events, while also encouraging broader involvement with both the school and the local community.

“We are hoping to do more around our community outreach and philanthropic pursuits; that is definitely part of our agenda,” O’Connor says. “A lot of members have connections with non-profit organisations, so we will explore how best to go about helping more people in Hong Kong.”

In parallel with that, Chan notes, proactive efforts to expand the network will include reaching out to other business school alumni associations in the region and organising at least one big joint event a year.

“In addition, we will be arranging surveys about the MBA programme and reflect opinions to the faculty,” Chan says. “Along with alumni speaking to classes and acting as ambassadors, it is another way to contribute and give something back to the school.”