



Alumni UK
Symposium 2025:
Shaping your future

6 – 7 March 2025,
Hong Kong

#AlumniUK

East Asia Alumni UK

Symposium 2025

Speakers' Profile

Last updated: 27 January 2025

www.britishcouncil.org

Programme

Time	Activity	Speakers
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	Keynote: Age of Discovery	Dr Chris Kurtana, Distinguished author, political scientist and TED Speaker and author of the international bestseller, Age of Discovery
13.30 – 14.15	Regional Strategic Forecast	Nick Marro, Principal Economist for Asia & Lead for Global Trade, Economist Intelligence Unit
14.15 – 15.15	Panel discussion: Future of Work - Trends and Predictions	<p>Panellists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paul McComb, Executive Director, The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong 2. Haslam Preston, Chief People & Culture Officer, CapitaLand Investment Limited; President, British Chamber of Commerce in Singapore 3. Jeremy Sargent, OBE, Partner, JS Associates Guangzhou Office; Chairman Emeritus of the British Chamber South China 4. Dato' Kathleen Chew Wai Lin, Group Legal Counsel, YLT Corporation Berhad <p>Moderated by: Jazreel Goh, Country Director Malaysia, East Asia Education Insights Hub Director, British Council</p>
15.15 – 15.45	Coffee break	


Time	Activity	Speakers
15.45 – 16.30	Panel discussion: Unleashing Entrepreneurial Potential: Navigating Opportunities and Overcoming Challenges	<p>Panellists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dinh Thuy Phuong, CEO, Bio-Advances JSC 2. Zaim Mohzani, Co-Founder, Nation Building School & Regional Coordinator, Chevening Alumni Southeast Asian Network (CASEAN) 3. Jirayut (Topp) Srupsrisopa, Founder and Group CEO, Bitkub Group 4. Yijing Wang, Founder, 2060 Advisory 5. Ahmad Subarkah Yuniarto, Executive Coach & Founding Chairman of Biru Peduli Foundation <p>Moderated by: Jeremy Sargent, OBE, Partner, JS Associates Guangzhou Office; Chairman Emeritus of the British Chamber South China</p>
16.30 – 17.15	Panel discussion: Amplifying Impact: Leveraging Alumni Networks for Personal and Institutional Advancement	<p>Panellists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jee Kwan Ng, Vice-President, Imperial College London Alumni Association of Malaysia (ICAAM), Region Manager APAC, Petromac 2. Prof Nguyen Khanh Dieu Hong, Principal of TH Schools and the CEO of the non-profit Go-Green Vietnam Foundation 3. Michael Chi On Wong, Board Member, Oxford University Alumni Board 4. Ryan Chong-Geng Xi, President, University of Cambridge Alumni Society of Guangdong <p>Moderated by: Catriona McCarthy, Global Head, Student Mobility and Internationalisation of UK Education, British Council</p>
17.15 – 18.00	Adaptability and Resilience	Rob Lilwall, Nat Geo TV Adventurer & Resilience Expert
18.00 – 18.15	Closing	Leighton Ernsberger, Regional Education Director, British Council

Speakers' Profile

Opening and closing

Role	Photo	Profile
Speaker		<p>Leighton Ernsberger, Regional Education Director, British Council</p> <p>Based in Singapore, Leighton leads the British Council's Education portfolio across South East Asia, North East Asia, Australasia and China. Leighton has worked in public education for 20 years in UK, US, South Asia and East Asia. In the UK, India and Nepal he has worked on vocational qualification reform, including programmes funded by the Asian Development Bank, the European Union and the UK Government. Across South Asia and East Asia his focus has turned to international Higher Education, working closely with the sector and key regional organisations like the ASEAN secretariate, the South East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), Asia Europe Foundation and UNESCO Asia Pacific.</p> <p>Leighton studied at Cardiff University, University of Warwick and most recently obtained an MA in Educational Planning, Economics and International Development, from the Institute of Education, University College London.</p>

Keynote: Age of Discovery

Role	Photo	Profile
Keynote		<p>Dr. Chris Kutarna is a distinguished author, political scientist and TED Speaker and author of the international bestseller, <i>Age of Discovery</i>.</p> <p>Dr Kutarna is an Associate Fellow of the Oxford University Martin School and the Oxford University Saïd Business School. He serves on the faculty of Oxford University’s executive education programmes. In that role, each year he helps thousands of senior executives from around the world to understand global patterns of human progress and the dynamics of geopolitical, technological, and social change. As a public speaker, Dr. Kutarna shares his perspectives and insights with a broad audience, from boardrooms to classrooms and cabinet offices. He is renowned for his ability to distill complex ideas into compelling narratives.</p> <p>His company, New Geo, helps large public- and private-sector organizations to accelerate their adaptation to a more complex world, via New Geo’s three fields of action-based inquiry: systems change, leadership development, and geopolitical foresight.</p> <p>With a PhD in Chinese Politics from Oxford University, Dr. Kutarna possesses a nuanced perspective on international relations and global policy-making. He built, and in 2020 exited, a 150-million subscriber social media content production company in China, with a focus on economics, finance and societal change. Today its key online influencers continue to supply New Geo with a unique pulse on Chinese politics, business and society.</p> <p>He lives in London.</p>



Regional Strategic Forecast

Role	Photo	Profile
Speaker		<p>Nick Marro, Principal Economist for Asia & Lead for Global Trade, Economist Intelligence Unit</p> <p>As Principal Economist for Asia, Nick helps craft and guide EIU's economic and political forecasts for the entire Asian region. He has a particular focus looking at the intersection between geopolitics and trade, and regularly delivers briefings on how to navigate the shifting era of globalisation, particularly in the context of China's evolving relationship with the West. Nick has specific responsibilities for EIU's views on Taiwan and Australia, while also helping shape our views for China and Hong Kong. In that role, Nick also leads EIU's analysis of China-Taiwan relations, including how companies and governments can mitigate the risks attached to cross-Strait ties.</p> <p>Nick previously conducted trade research in Beijing with the US-China Business Council, where he advised US companies on the Chinese market. He graduated from the University of Virginia with degrees in Foreign Affairs and Chinese, and holds graduate certification from the Johns Hopkins-Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies.</p>

Panel discussion: Future of Work - Trends and Predictions

Role	Photo	Profile
Panellist		<p>Paul McComb, Executive Director, The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong</p> <p>Paul McComb is the Executive Director of the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, bringing a wealth of experience and a strong track record in business and commercial leadership. Paul has been actively involved in enhancing the Chamber’s support for its members. He has spearheaded numerous events and initiatives aimed at promoting business growth and fostering a collaborative business community.</p> <p>Before joining the British Chamber of Commerce, Paul served as the Director-General of Trade and Investment at the British Consulate-General in Hong Kong from 2017 to 2021. In this role, he was instrumental in fostering trade relations between the UK and Hong Kong, driving significant investment initiatives, and supporting UK businesses in navigating the complexities of international markets.</p> <p>Paul’s extensive experience also includes his tenure in the UK, where he played a pivotal role in helping businesses adjust to new trading dynamics post-Brexit and addressing the economic impacts of global events such as the war in Ukraine.</p>
Panellist		<p>Haslam Preston, Chief People & Culture Officer, CapitaLand Investment Limited; President, British Chamber of Commerce in Singapore</p> <p>Haslam is Chief People and Culture Officer at CapitaLand Investment (CLI), where he is responsible for leading the Group Human Resources function across CLI, a leading global real asset manager with S\$115bn funds under management.</p> <p>Before joining CLI, Haslam worked at Jardine Matheson for over two decades, with postings in Beijing, Macau, Hong Kong, Jakarta and Singapore. Haslam’s last role with Jardines was Director, People and Culture, Southeast Asia at DFI Retail Group.</p> <p>Haslam is President of the British Chamber of Commerce in Singapore and sits on the Singapore Government’s National Wages Council. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in War Studies from King’s College, University of London, a Master of Arts in Chinese Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and a Post Graduate Diploma in Surveying from Reading University.</p>



<p>Panellist</p>		<p>Jeremy Sargent, OBE, Partner, JS Associates Guangzhou Office; Chairman Emeritus of the British Chamber South China</p> <p>Jeremy's interest in China began after his first trip to Guangzhou in 1978. Jeremy returned to China as a foreign student in 1985, as part of his degree programme at the University of Leeds.</p> <p>A decade later, Jeremy returned to China as a newly qualified lawyer to assist a major London-based international law firm open its first office in Mainland China.</p> <p>In 2010, Jeremy opened The Happy Monk, a gastro bar in Guangzhou. Over the years, The Happy Monk is an award-winning brand operating six locations.</p> <p>Jeremy is passionate about personal development and mentorship. In 2019 Jeremy completed an Executive MBA. Jeremy mentors students at Hong Kong University.</p> <p>Jeremy is Chairman Emeritus of the British Chamber South China, and Honorary Legal Advisor to the British Embassy in China.</p> <p>In 2011 Jeremy was awarded an OBE by Queen Elizabeth II for his services to British businesses and legal services in China.</p>
<p>Panellist</p>		<p>Dato' Kathleen Chew Wai Lin, Group Legal Counsel, YLT Corporation Berhad</p> <p>Dato' Kathleen Chew is the Group Legal Counsel of the YTL Group and Programme Director of the YTL Foundation, a foundation working to provide equitable access to quality education and development of capable values driven leaders. She was Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum on ASEAN 2016 and a Local Ambassador for the British Council's Study UK Alumni Awards 2018. She sits on the boards of various Malaysian and UK charities, the Asia Philanthropy Circle in Singapore and Acumen Fund, Inc, New York. She is also Chairperson of Hospis Malaysia and Alpha Malaysia. She is a Trustee of Alpha International and St Paul's Theological Centre in the UK.</p> <p>She was listed on the Kindness & Leadership 50 Leading Lights Asia Pacific in 2024.</p>

Moderator



Jazreel Goh, Country Director Malaysia, East Asia Education Insights Hub Director, British Council

Jazreel first joined the British Council in June 2004 where she led on the UK’s largest education and partnership initiatives in mainland China.



Prior to that, Jazreel Goh worked in various organisations in Malaysia, Australia, as well as Hong Kong in the areas of brand management, corporate planning and investment, international education consultancy, as well as in intellectual property licensing.

In 2011 she set up the British Council’s Education Intelligence Unit – the first e-marketing platform dedicated to international education research for the industry globally. In 2013, she led the development and launched the UK’s flagship outward mobility programme - Generation UK which has since led to a 104% growth in British students to China. During her tenure, the UK became one of the largest providers of transnational education in China and the first country to initiate a multi-lateral education collaboration platform bringing together institutional partners from UK, China, Sub-Saharan Africa and ASEAN countries on co-funded projects.


Jazreel Goh was born in Malaysia and after completing her secondary school in Malaysia and senior secondary school in Singapore, left for further studies in Melbourne, Australia. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Monash University and was awarded the Equity and Merit Scholarship by the Australian Government to undertake her Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics. She was awarded an MBE in 2017 for her services to UK education in China.

Jazreel returned to Malaysia in September 2020 to take up the roles as Director Malaysia and Head of East Asia Insights Hub for the British Council. She was listed as one of the top 50 Voices in the Australia-ASEAN international education sector by The PIE Insider Leadership Digest 2023.



Panel discussion: Unleashing Entrepreneurial Potential: Navigating Opportunities and Overcoming Challenges

Role	Photo	Profile
Panellist		<p>Dinh Thuy Phuong, CEO, Bio-Advances JSC</p> <p>Dinh Thuy Phuong, Change-maker, Sustainer, and CEO of Bio-Advances JSC, is recognised for her exceptional performance in Sustainability. Phuong has developed a strong passion for sustainable values since she studied MA in Management at the University of Northampton, the UK. In 2021, she was rewarded the Winner of the UK Alumni Awards for Business and Innovation for the Reed-based Bio Circular Economy model. Phuong’s UK strong education has set a foundation for a higher standard of learning to transfer knowledge to others. In 2024, she was invited as a Delegate attending the 15th Annual Geneva Institute for Leadership and Public Policy conference “Good Governance in an Urbanizing World, Value-driven Leadership for a Sustainable Future” held in Geneva, Switzerland, which was co-hosted by the UNITAR. Apart from being a dedicated member of The UK Young Researcher, Phuong has also been well-rated as one of Harvard Alumni Entrepreneurs Stars in 2025.</p>
Panellist		<p>Zaim Mohzani, Co-Founder, Nation Building School & Regional Coordinator, Chevening Alumni Southeast Asian Network (CASEAN)</p> <p>Zaim Mohzani is the Co-Founder of Nation Building School, a social enterprise addressing youth unemployment through career empowerment programs. He is also the Senior Director of External Relations at KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific, ASEAN’s top-ranked think tank, where he drives regional cooperation initiatives.</p> <p>A Chevening Scholar, Zaim earned a Master’s in International Strategy and Diplomacy with Distinction from the London School of Economics and led Chevening Alumni Malaysia and the Chevening Alumni Southeast Asian Network. He is an Associate Fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society and an Asia 21 Next Generation Fellow (2024). Zaim has been recognised with numerous accolades, including The Edge Media’s Inspiring Young Leader (2019) and Best Perdana Fellow (2023).</p> <p>His leadership has been celebrated globally through programs such as Dalai Lama Fellows, Acumen Academy Fellowship, British Council Future Leaders Connect, and ASEAN Youth Fellowship, showcasing his impact on regional policy, leadership, and innovation.</p>



Moderator		<p>Jeremy Sargent, OBE, Partner, JS Associates Guangzhou Office; Chairman Emeritus of the British Chamber South China</p> <p>Jeremy's interest in China began after his first trip to Guangzhou in 1978. Jeremy returned to China as a foreign student in 1985, as part of his degree programme at the University of Leeds.</p> <p>A decade later, Jeremy returned to China as a newly qualified lawyer to assist a major London-based international law firm open its first office in Mainland China.</p> <p>In 2010, Jeremy opened The Happy Monk, a gastro bar in Guangzhou. Over the years, The Happy Monk is an award-winning brand operating six locations.</p> <p>Jeremy is passionate about personal development and mentorship. In 2019 Jeremy completed an Executive MBA. Jeremy mentors students at Hong Kong University.</p> <p>Jeremy is Chairman Emeritus of the British Chamber South China, and Honorary Legal Advisor to the British Embassy in China.</p> <p>In 2011 Jeremy was awarded an OBE by Queen Elizabeth II for his services to British businesses and legal services in China.</p>
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Panel discussion: Amplifying Impact: Leveraging Alumni Networks for Personal and Institutional Advancement


Role	Photo	Profile
Panellist		<p>Jee Kwan Ng, Vice-President, Imperial College London Alumni Association of Malaysia (ICAAM), Region Manager APAC, Petromac</p> <p>Jee Kwan Ng is the Vice-President of Imperial College London Alumni Association of Malaysia (ICAAM); a volunteer role he was elected to since 2022. Before that he had been active in the Committee since 2016 when he returned to Malaysia. Together with the Committee, Jee Kwan organises regular alumni events that aims to cater to over 700 alumni in Malaysia that graduated from Imperial from the 70's to recent fresh graduates. The goal is to foster a strong network of alumni that carries Imperial's mission to achieve enduring excellence in their respective fields for the benefit of society.</p> <p>Jee Kwan graduated from Imperial with an MEng in Mechanical Engineering in 2006. He joined the Oil & Gas industry with Schlumberger where he spent 11 years in various roles on 3 different continents. In 2019 he co-founded a technology startup with 3 other Imperial alumni. He's currently the Region Manager APAC for Petromac, a New Zealand founded global Oil & Gas startup offering innovative Wireline Conveyance Systems.</p>
Panellist		<p>Prof Nguyen Khanh Dieu Hong, Principal of TH Schools and the CEO of the non-profit Go-Green Vietnam Foundation</p> <p>Professor Nguyễn Khánh Diệu Hồng is a highly awarded chemical engineer, educator, author, and a distinguished leader in renewable energy and STEM advocacy. After earning her Ph.D. in Chemistry at University College London in 2007 and completing postdoctoral research at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, she returned to Vietnam to develop innovative curricula and research in clean fuels and green chemistry, teaching undergraduate, master's, and Ph.D. students.</p> <p>As Vietnam's youngest Associate Professor in 2012 and youngest Professor in 2019, her career is marked by exceptional achievements. She is currently the Principal of TH Schools and the CEO of the non-profit Go-Green Vietnam Foundation, supporting young scientists, inventors, and students. Professor Hong has been recognized with prestigious awards, including the Certificate of Merit for</p>

		<p>contributions to scientific research (2017), recognition as one of 25 National Intellectuals by the Prime Minister of Vietnam (2020), and Champion of the UK Alumni Award for Sustainable Science and Technology (2021-2022). She also received the "For Youth Medal" in 2024 for her efforts in empowering the next generation.</p>
<p>Panellist</p>		<p>Michael Chi On Wong, Board Member, Oxford University Alumni Board</p> <p>Michael Chi On Wong is an experienced educator and professional manager specialising in teaching, research, consulting, communications, and management. He possesses two BA degrees from the University of Southern California and an MSc degree from the University of Oxford. Based in Hong Kong, China, he is the founder and director of Oxonia Company, whilst serving on the Regional Board of the Chartered Management Institute. He also holds academic appointments such as Lecturer at the Hong Kong Baptist University and Teaching Fellow at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Over the years, Michael has actively contributed to the promotion of alumni relations and development for Oxford as an alumnus. He had chaired the organising committee of the Oxbridge Varsity Ball, led the Oxford and Cambridge Society of Hong Kong as president, and is currently a member of Oxford's official Alumni Board who advises and advocates for the University globally.</p>
<p>Panellist</p>		<p>Ryan Chong-Geng Xi, President of the University of Cambridge Alumni Society of Guangdong</p> <p>Ryan Chong-Geng Xi is an accomplished professional with degrees in Electronic and Electrical Engineering (BEng, University College London) and Engineering (MPhil, University of Cambridge).</p> <p>Ryan has held several leadership roles, including President of the University of Cambridge Alumni Society of Guangdong (2023-present) and Head of Online Retail at Girdear Group (APP) since 2022. He also serves as a Board Member for Guizhou Lixingfa Alcohol Group (2022-present) and an Associate Member of ChinaINeda, Ryan continues to make impactful contributions in various sectors.</p>
<p>Moderator</p>		<p>Catriona McCarthy, Global Head, Student Mobility and Internationalisation of UK education, British Council</p> <p>Catriona joined the British Council from Ulster University, where she was the University's founding Director for Global Engagement, leading on the University's Global Engagement strategy and operations.</p>



		<p>During that time, she also served as Vice Chair and then Chair of the British Universities International Liaison Association, and was the organisation's second female Chair and the first Chair to come from one of the devolved nations.</p> <p>Catriona has spent more than 20 years working in support of internationalisation in Higher Education. Prior to joining Ulster University, she served as Deputy Director International at the University of Edinburgh, where she had particular responsibility for the establishment and management of the University's Global Offices. She has also worked at the University of Aberdeen and at Heriot Watt University.</p> <p>Catriona has served as a member of both the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) International Advisory Group and of the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) Strategic Advisory Committee. She is a Non-Exec Director at Ireland's largest overseas aid charity, sits on the Advisory Board of a successful Ed-Tech company and is a member of the Visit Belfast Ambassador Circle Steering Group. She also holds an MA Hons in History and Literature, as well as professional qualifications in marketing and project management, and is currently studying a MSc in Leadership and Innovation in Public Services.</p>
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Adaptability and Resilience

Role	Photo	Profile
Speaker		<p>Rob Lilwall, Nat Geo TV Adventurer & Resilience Expert</p> <p>British-born Rob Lilwall is a globally acclaimed motivational speaker and adventurer whose incredible 70,000 km cycling expeditions have taken him through some of the world’s most extreme environments—ice, jungles, deserts, and warzones. Featured on National Geographic, BBC, and TEDx, Rob combines unforgettable stories from his adventures with cutting-edge insights from Positive Psychology to equip teams with the mindsets and habits needed to thrive in today’s rapidly changing world. With over 15 years of experience, Rob has inspired audiences at global conferences, client events, and leadership forums across more than 50 cities. Known for his authenticity, humour, and actionable takeaways, Rob empowers professionals to embrace change, build resilience, and develop agility in the face of challenges. His presentations are not just memorable—they are transformative, leaving audiences energized and ready to achieve extraordinary results.</p>