



INSEAD tops this year's list of MBA providers

Top business schools gear up for MBA upgrade in 2017

An innovation driven economy requires more than the old school.

Singapore's MBA programmes saw significant declines of 10 to 20% amongst international students in the first quarter of 2017, with less full time enrollees from major source countries such as China, Vietnam, and India, amidst signs of industry consolidation. With this trend well on the way, Singapore's top MBA providers are set to implement major programme updates and overhauls in the midst of an increasingly competitive global arena and a highly dynamic and volatile economic environment.

Established business educators in the city are acquiring new campuses and facilities, adopting flexible internship arrangements, ramping up partnerships for international placements, and tapping on technology to deliver more accessible education for its multi-tasking student population. Traditional courses are enhanced with more socially relevant themes, and new highly-specialised degrees are being offered in conjunction with general tracks.

Lim Bee Ing, centre director, Manchester Business School (MBS), Southeast Asia Centre,

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says that long-established MBA providers around the world are using innovation, economies of scale, and employer recognition to establish their footprints in major financial hubs, thereby continuing to ease out smaller institutions and recent entrants. Top local MBA providers in Singapore are not threatened, as they step up to the challenge by expanding international networks and strengthening partnerships with the national government.

Innovative education

Prateek Nayak, regional head, Southeast Asia, Amity Global Business School, shares that as the market is experiencing a state of consolidation and that as the demand decreases due to government intervention, it is a good time for business schools to make improvements to their curricula and maintain their competitive position in the market. "Increasingly, people know what they want with regard to their interest and career plans. Instead of embarking on a general degree, they enroll into programmes that can equip them with specialised skills and knowledge in fields such as finance,

human resource management, and entrepreneurship and help them to scale the career ladder," says **Dr Sam Choon-Yin**, dean, PSB Academy. "As the government initiatives on 'SG Skillsfuture' expanded the funding into a wider spread of 'skill courses' or VET courses, the local segment swung to a stabilised situation as the demand was captured by the public funded programmes. However, these impacts may be marginal in the case of the MBA academe," adds Nayak.

As providers innovate, it is crucial to differentiate and offer firsts, not mere rehashes of what others already have. Branding is key, and students hope to find the best institution that could provide them with a better individual market branding.

Revamps and reboots

With the ongoing weeding out of programmes, incumbent players which have maintained a stable demand now have the opportunity to boost recruitment and creativity. **Marie-Antonie Chua Nan Sze**, director, Graduate Studies, NUS Business School, NUS, says that NUS has answered the call for greater flexibility in its MBA programme. She says that the introduction of a credit-bearing internship will allow MBA students to take on good full-time internships even when such opportunities become available during the main study semesters, and at the same time, earn modular credits that can be counted toward the MBA programme.

Other notable changes include Amity Global Business School's acquisition of a new main campus at Kay Siang Road and INSEAD's online platform for its accelerated 10-month MBA. AGBS's campus boasts of a Fashion Studio, Engineering Laboratories, Moot Courts, and Business Incubators to assist students and alumni in business venture startups with a holistic education with Amity. On the other hand, INSEAD's online platform offers an early start to students by leveraging new



Amity Global Business School's main campus at Kay Siang Road

technologies with online content, “integrated” digital cases, and industry-specific orientation videos for participants.

“The shift in emphasis is to help arm students with life skills. Old-school rote learning and memorising have given way to applying textbook knowledge to real-world scenarios and more current content. Language lessons and assessment now place more weight on communication skills to help students converse in English language efficiently,” says **Eric Lim**, head of MDIS Business School, Management Development Institute of Singapore.

MBS Lim says that their programme prides itself in its international network and the benefits of sharing knowledge and experience across this network. MBS, with its focus on applied learning, offers a selection of intensive face-to-face residential workshops at its centre, as well as with partner global centres in Asia, UK, the Middle East, and the Americas.

Equipping students with the right set of life skills may also be done in the context of each student’s personality, goals, and life situation. **Urs Peyer**, dean of degree programmes and associate professor of finance at INSEAD, shares the highlights of INSEAD’s new MBA curriculum, one of which is a personalised learning journey aimed to guide students to develop self-awareness, interpersonal skills, and communication effectiveness through professional and peer coaching.

Business schools across Singapore are beginning to offer highly specialised courses and programmes,

one of which is the Specialisation in Innovation & Entrepreneurship by NUS. To be launched in August 2017, this programme incorporates inputs by an Entrepreneurship Expert Panel consisting of academics, practitioners, as well as alumni, and will consist of new electives, including more Experiential & International Learning opportunities for budding entrepreneurs and creative intrapreneurs.

Further studies

Professionals and executives who wish to specialise further and reach the top of the business ladder have more than a wide array of career paths to choose from. For those who aim to take it a notch higher, the PSB Academy is set to launch its first Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) course with its partner Edinburgh Napier University as an

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additional option for executives who want to pursue further studies.

“Equivalent to the Ph.D. in terms of originality of work and academic achievement, the DBA emphasises contribution to business knowledge and the application of ideas to the business environment. It blends theoretical learning with practical experience based on a business context to create a reflective practitioner,” says Choon-Yin. In the meantime, Lim says that part of MBS’s long term strategy is the introduction of new programmes in line with those already launched by the University of Manchester. One of the programmes that students can look forward to is the dual MBA degrees with Kelley School of Business and Renmin University in China.

Who made it to the list?

INSEAD’s accelerated 10-month MBA continues to attract enrollment. The school topped the list with 1,055 students in 2017. NUS ranks second with 617 students across its various MBA programmes, with most students enrolled for an NUS MBA and an NUS Executive MBA. James Cook University follows at third place with 311 students for its James Cook University MBA. The Manchester Business Schools comes in at a close fourth with 300 students enrolled in its Manchester Global Master of Business Administration. The Management Development Institute of Singapore finishes the top five with 248 students across its three MBA offerings.



Manchester Business School clinches the fourth spot with 300 students