



**University of  
Nottingham**  
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

## **Nottingham's graduates viewed as 'stabilising force' in a volatile world**

International higher education must equip graduates with 'soft skills' if the world is to face up to the geopolitical, economic, environmental, and social challenges of the next 25 years, argued experts from business, industry and government at a seminal round-table discussion.

Coming together to mark the University of Nottingham's 25-year jubilee celebrations of the campus in Malaysia and 21 years of the Ningbo campus; leaders tackled big picture questions during a round table debate on 'what the world needs next from higher education'.

They predicted that the speed of advancement in AI and technology would only drive up employer demand for human skills: communication, negotiation, influencing, critical thinking, and analysis.

Dr Tuck Leong Chan from Energy giant PETRONAS said: "Industry changes quickly and we can teach the technical skills. What we need is graduates who can adapt quickly. Higher education institutes must nurture well-rounded, bright, articulate and curious graduates with an ability to work with people, understand what they do and be able to ask the right questions to be able to make things fit together. That's an employable graduate."

Now an established gateway for students, teaching and research across Asia-Pacific, and bridge between Asia and Europe, the University of Nottingham's UK, China and Malaysia campuses have a community of some 500,000 alumni, hundreds of industry partnerships, and dozens of strategic partnerships with business, academia and government.

Professor David FitzPatrick, Provost and CEO of the University of Nottingham Malaysia said: "We have played a leadership role in delivering high quality graduates into Asia-Pacific. But education must evolve and adapt to the needs of society. Technology, AI, economic development and climate change - today is a very different world that will demand more from global universities like ours. Our collective ambition is for Nottingham to remain at the leading edge globally now and into the future."

Demand for higher education is rising exponentially. Student numbers grew from 52m in 1992 to 250m in 2020. By 2030, growth to 450m is predicted - driven mainly by low- and medium-income countries.

Professor Zoe Wilson, the University of Nottingham's Pro Vice Chancellor for Science, said: "Training students is going to be fundamental in building a better world. Our three campuses

give our students huge opportunity to be exposed to new opportunities and challenge. An integral part of the UK education and the scientific method is being trained to challenge in positive ways – considering and reflecting on your knowledge and other people’s views.”

Professor Jon Garibaldi, Provost and CEO of the University of Nottingham Ningbo said that employers across China recognised the development of soft skills as the key strength of a British education; and that they valued the confidence afforded by a global higher education.

City of London’s David Lamarre-Stronger, of Fortis Consulting, “The University of Nottingham is a well-established gateway into Asia with an opportunity to capitalise on this position as demand for education grows. Business and industry need team players, business developers, innovators: people with resilience, agility and people who are tech savvy.”

British Council’s education director Jazreeh Goh and ethical investment company Blue Onion’s strategic adviser Dato Dr Munirah Looi pushed for global higher education institutes to ensure their research, teaching and strategic thinking responds to local contexts.

Dr Looi said: “We have an ageing population in Malaysia. It’s important to adapt programmes to prepare graduates to focus on the challenges of an ageing population and the potential gap that is coming. A high level of industry collaboration is key, as is the reskilling and upskilling of the business and general community – with access to lifelong learning through micro credentials.”

Jazreeh Goh said: “There are changes undergoing socially that will require a paradigm shift. Do not define yourself as a UK university with campuses, but as a global university with hubs driving and leading work from any one hub at any one time.”

Prof Jon Garibaldi committed to ongoing dialogue with Nottingham’s APAC community. “This is a timely and necessary set of engagements, where we are taking stock of where we have come from and what we need to do next.”

Further engagements will take place in London, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. To take part in the dialogue, contact [cristina.chapman@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:cristina.chapman@nottingham.ac.uk)