



## Press Release – For Immediate Release

To: Assignment Editor/Editor of Education and Local News Sections

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### **HSUHK study reveals Hong Kong’s strong global competitiveness in doctoral education**

Hong Kong is emerging as a highly competitive destination for doctoral education, driven by flexible post-study immigration pathways, strong funding support, and a dynamic research environment, according to a new comparative study by The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong (HSUHK). Among the first of its kind, the study systematically examines doctoral education policies and student experiences across major higher education hubs.

Drawing on comparative policy analysis and in-depth interviews with 50 doctoral students and university leaders in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and the United Kingdom from September 2025 to February 2026, the study offers new insights into how global doctoral candidates decide where to pursue and continue their research careers. Early findings indicate that Hong Kong performs strongly in attracting and retaining high-calibre PhD students amid intensifying international competition for research talent.

#### **Flexible Immigration Pathways a Key Advantage**

The study finds that immigration policies and post-study work opportunities are among the most decisive factors influencing international doctoral students’ choices.

Hong Kong stands out for its flexible post-study arrangements, including the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS) and the Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates (IANG), which allow graduates to remain in the city for up to 24 months without a prior job offer. Interviewees described this flexibility as a critical advantage that enables them to explore academic, research, or industry careers with greater security.

By comparison, the United Kingdom offers multiple post-study visa routes but faces concerns over high visa and healthcare costs. Singapore provides strong employment opportunities but typically requires a job offer and salary threshold, while Malaysia’s work visa system relies more heavily on employer sponsorship.

Across all locations, doctoral candidates emphasised that clear, predictable, and affordable immigration pathways play a crucial role in long-term career and settlement decisions.

#### **Competitive Funding Attracts Global Talent**

Funding competitiveness also emerged as a major draw. Hong Kong’s PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS) was widely recognised as internationally competitive, offering full tuition waivers and generous stipends. Interviewees noted that financial security allowed them to focus on research excellence rather than economic pressures.



While Singapore, the UK, and Malaysia also offer strong funding schemes, interviewees perceived Hong Kong's overall package as particularly attractive. At the same time, the study highlights that funding alone is not sufficient — doctoral candidates also consider supervision quality, institutional reputation, research culture, and long-term career prospects.

### Research Environment and Family Policies Matter

The study confirms that research reputation and academic environment remain powerful magnets for doctoral talent. The UK continues to benefit from long-established global prestige, while Hong Kong and Singapore were frequently described as rapidly rising research hubs, especially in engineering, business, technology, and applied sciences.

Family-friendly policies also influence long-term retention. Hong Kong allows dependants to accompany doctoral students, with spouses permitted to work without restriction — an advantage cited by many interviewees, despite concerns about high living costs.

### Strategic Implications for Hong Kong

Overall, the findings suggest that Hong Kong is well positioned among global doctoral education hubs but must continue to innovate to stay competitive. The research team identifies four strategic priorities:

- Strengthening post-study immigration pathways to support long-term talent retention
- Sustaining globally competitive doctoral funding schemes
- Deepening investment in research infrastructure and industry collaboration
- Enhancing global promotion of Hong Kong's doctoral strengths, particularly in emerging and interdisciplinary fields

Titled *“Strategies to Attract and Retain High-calibre Talents to Pursue Further Studies at Doctorate Level in Hong Kong for Nurturing Specialised Talents that will Contribute to Hong Kong's Development”*, the project is funded by the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme of the Government of the HKSAR (Project No. E2025.B12.011).

**The Principal Investigator** of the project, Professor Mok Ka-ho, Provost and Vice-President (Academic and Research) of HSUHK, said, “Doctoral education plays a pivotal role in building a knowledge-based economy. Hong Kong has developed strong foundations, but in an increasingly competitive global landscape, sustained policy commitment and strategic refinement are essential to attract and retain the world's best research talents. Our findings also show that global talents are deeply interested in researching issues related to Hong Kong and the development of the Greater Bay Area, and are keen to explore future career and innovation opportunities not only in Hong Kong, but across the wider region.”

This project adopts a four-phase sequential mixed-methods design and is currently in progress.

1. Phase 1: Comparative policy analysis of doctoral education and talent attraction strategies (completed).
2. Phase 2: 50 in-depth interviews with PhD students and university leaders across Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and the UK (completed).



3. Phase 3: Survey of non-local PhD students in Hong Kong (in progress).
4. Phase 4: Social media analysis examining broader perceptions of pursuing a PhD in Hong Kong (forthcoming).

The project runs from June 2025 to June 2026. Further findings from Phases 3 and 4 will be released upon completion.

### Project Team

S/N	Role	Name	Affiliation
1.	Principal Investigator	Professor Joshua Mok Ka-ho	Provost and Vice-President (Academic and Research) The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
2.	Co- Investigators	Dr Zhen Tian	Research Assistant Professor Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Polytechnic University of Hong Kong
3.		Dr Rainie Ke	Lecturer School of Transdisciplinary Studies, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
4.		Dr William Lo Yat-wai	Associate Professor School of Education, Durham University, United Kingdom
5.		Dr Ayomide Oluwaseyi Oladosu	Senior Research Associate School of Transdisciplinary Studies, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

Click [here](#) for PowerPoint presented at the press briefing.

For details about the project, please visit the project's website: <https://sts.hsu.edu.hk/en/hong-kong-doctoral-talent-development-project/>

### Disclaimer

Any information, opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material/event (or by members of the research team) do not represent the views of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and/or the Assessment Panel.

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Photos:



Photo 1: HSUHK releases its first comparative study to systematically examine doctoral education policies and student experiences across major higher education hubs. Group photo of the research team, including (from left) Dr Ayomide Oluwaseyi Oladosu, Professor Joshua Mok, and Dr Rainie Ke.



Photo 2: Professor Mok states that the study indicates that global talents are keen to explore future career and innovation opportunities not only in Hong Kong but also across the wider region.

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香港恒生大學  
THE HANG SENG UNIVERSITY  
OF HONG KONG

### **About The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong**

The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong (HSUHK) is a non-profit private liberal-arts-oriented university with six Schools (Business, Communication, Decision Sciences, Humanities and Social Science, Translation and Foreign Languages, and Transdisciplinary Studies), and over 7,000 full-time undergraduate and postgraduate students. With its unique “Liberal + Professional” education model, HSUHK nurtures young talent with critical thinking, innovative minds, caring attitudes, moral values and social responsibility.

Aspiring to be a leading private university in the region, HSUHK prioritises stellar undergraduate education, top-quality faculty members, award-winning green campus facilities, innovative degree programmes, a unique residential college system that combines living and learning, interactive small-class teaching, close student-teacher relationships, impactful research, and excellent student development and support services.

HSUHK has earned various international recognitions. In the AppliedHE’s ALL ASIA Private University Ranking 2026, it secured 7th place in the Greater China region. HSUHK ranked 22nd in Social Sciences and Humanities and 33rd in Economics and Finance among China’s top universities in the Research.com Top Universities and Top Scientists Rankings 2025. The MSc in Global Supply Chain Management programme achieved 84th place globally in the QS International Trade Rankings 2025. Additionally, HSUHK’s School of Business obtained AACSB International accreditation in 2023, a mark of excellence held by only 6% of the world’s leading business schools. HSUHK was also ranked among the top 200 worldwide on “Quality Education” and “Decent Work and Economic Growth” in the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings 2021.