



## THE OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE SOCIETY OF SINGAPORE

**Patron: H.E. Lee Hsien Loong**  
**Prime Minister of Singapore**



21<sup>st</sup> Dec 2020

### **Short Note about the Oxbridge Society of Singapore ([www.oxbridge.org.sg](http://www.oxbridge.org.sg))**

For more than 100 of the last 200 years, Oxbridge alumni have been Prime Ministers, Governors and Colonial Secretaries of Singapore. It was an Oxbridge alumnus, Lord Hastings, who also gave the green light for the founding of modern Singapore in 1819.

Our history mirrors that of modern Singapore, initially comprising the colonial administrators post War and then the dynamic core of our independence leaders including Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew; Law Minister Eddie Barker, who drafted the Proclamation of Independence, which PM Lee Kuan Yew called “an adroit bloodless coup” and also our Separation Agreement from Malaysia; and Chief Justice Wee Chong Jin.

The Society was ultimately registered with the Registrar of Societies in 1961.

On our website are photographs of our founding President of Singapore, Yusof Ishak, and founding Prime Minister of independent Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, attending our annual dinners in the 1960s.

From that start, the Society morphed into becoming the wider alumni grouping for our returning Oxbridge scholars, who were taking on not just political leadership but also leadership of the administrative service, professions, armed forces, judiciary and the media. Over time, this membership has happily grown to include our private sector alumni.

Our members now comprise the 3000 plus alumni of both Cambridge and Oxford, most of whom are Singapore citizens, but also several hundred expatriates based here, some of whom are also office holders within the Society. PM Lee Hsien Loong (an alumnus) is our Patron. Our Constitution provides for a permanent seat on our Executive committee for a nominee from the British High Commission in Singapore, reflecting our antecedents.

The Society is steadfastly apolitical, but also a respected political salon, promoting confidential non-partisan political dialogue under our hallmark Fireside Chats (Chatham House rules), often held at the Pyramid Club. These dialogues have allowed us, in a confidential, respectful, and persuasive way to comment on governance, issues of the day and provide useful feedback in the Singapore way.

We also organise social gatherings and cultural events.

We host an annual Boat Race (mirroring the famous UK Boat Race). We have given the event a public interest by partnering with NCCS to make the races an Annual Row for Hope fundraising charity event for National Cancer Centre Singapore, in which event Oxbridge Hong Kong and Oxbridge Malaysia have participated. A former British Cabinet Minister, as well as Singapore Ministers have also graced the event.

We support various national initiatives and help where we can.

We have also played a useful role beyond our shores - for example, in galvanising specific partnerships between Oxford University and Singapore government agencies. We arranged for the Vice Chancellor of Oxford, who is a global expert on terrorism, to meet Ministers Shanmugam, Minister Janil, and the heads of Internal Security and Cybersecurity over a dinner we hosted to kickstart Singapore experts working with Oxford counterparts in cybersecurity, terrorism profiling at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and also at the Oxford Networks for the Environment, tackling climate change, food security, water and energy resilience.

Similarly, we have been involved in two Global Cambridge initiatives held in Singapore and in supporting the “Dear World..... Yours Cambridge” fundraising.

In 2018, we launched an Entrepreneur Mentor Programme for our younger alumni headed by our CEO members, three of whom are on the Forbes list running global family businesses but are happy to make time to mentor our budding talents. Some of our younger members (including two serving on our Executive Committee) have also made a transition from the administrative service into business, which is good for Singapore’s future.

We organise annual Freshers going up events, Careers Fairs for returning graduates and mock interview trainings before their Oxbridge interviews for our gifted school leavers.

We also host visiting Heads of Colleges, the respective Vice Chancellors and Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge Universities (for example Lord Patten) when they are passing through.

We have used our platform to engage with high profile alumnus in the region. The Queen of Johore (Oxford alumnus- <https://goo.gl/photos/mcCqEqernykdisX39>) has been to one of our events. We have reciprocity arrangements with Oxbridge Hong Kong and Oxbridge Malaysia.

Past Presidents / VPs of the Society have included Law Minister Eddie Barker, Chief Justice Wee Chong Jin, Chief Justice Yong Pung How, Singapore’s leading post war economist- Professor Lim Chong Yah, Dr Lee Suan Yew, Professor Cham Tao Soon (President NTU), Chelva Rajah SC, former Commissioner of Police Khoo Boon Hui, and Dr Michael Hwang SC (former Chief Justice of Dubai Financial Centre). A significant number of the Singapore Cabinet since independence are Oxbridge alumni and the current PM, DPM, and Senior Ministers are all Cambridge alumni.

Our Fireside Chat speakers have included Cabinet Ministers, a Chairman of the Noble Prize selection committee, globally eminent academics passing through, foreign thought leaders and civil society advocates.

We launched a Meet the Ambassador series in 2017, where Ambassadors/ High Commissioners based here come and talk about their country’s relationship with Singapore, the politics of their country, and issues of common interest. This has proved informative to our members. Heads of Mission of the USA, Japan, India and the United Kingdom have thus participated.

We launched the S R Nathan Hard Seats lecture as a national keynote lecture to commemorate former President of Singapore SR Nathan making a special effort to address us shortly before his death. Minister Chan Chun Sing delivered the second lecture on political leadership renewal in Singapore, covered by prime time television and the major press.

PM Lee Hsien Loong, as Patron, attended the Society’s gala dinner to celebrate the 800th anniversary of Cambridge University and delivered a keynote address. PM Lee and his wife also graced the Singapore Bicentennial Carol Service of Thanksgiving we conceptualized and helped to co-organise with the National Council of Churches and the Anglican Diocese, supported by the Singapore Interreligious Organization to give thanks for the past 200 years of modern Singapore. A leading Cambridge choir was invited to participate in this special event and financial coverage of the entire costs for the choir was secured here.

As an alumnus we are grateful for the opportunities we have had, and to our alma maters and help fly their flags and progress their interests here. We arranged for the choir of St Johns College Cambridge to provide a special sung tribute at the Lying in State of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew within the Singapore Parliament.

We also seek, unreservedly, to value add to Singapore.

Dato Paul Supramaniam,  
President 2016 - 2020

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