

# GROOMING NEW TALENTS FOR HONG KONG'S FUTURE



**F**inding a job after graduation seems like a daunting task, but the transition is made much easier for PolyU students who are not only equipped with the right technical knowledge employers require, but also already have some work experience in preparing for the real world, thus having “practical value”.

It was recently revealed in a survey completed by *AC Nielsen (China) Ltd.* that PolyU graduates fare the best among graduates of other universities in terms of practical value, meaning PolyU students are best equipped with technical and professional knowledge relevant to the jobs they are employed in.

With 26 academic departments and three centres grouped under six faculties, the University is the sole provider of several degree programmes such as fashion design, physiotherapy, building services engineering and optometry, thus enabling its students to have the advantage in job hunting. As three-year degree programmes are offered, much material is covered in this short time period. Nevertheless, the information taught to the students is practical and in tune with what employers demand from today's generation.

**Simon Cheung Yan-kit** is a year-two student currently studying accounting. Although the 20-year-old knew back in form six he wanted to enter in this field and was already exposed to the area, he admitted he found this year particularly difficult.

“In year two we learned professional subjects like taxation, marketing, management and financial accounting,” says Mr. Cheung. “It’s more challenging because we need to know the basics and prepare the accounts according to Hong Kong standards. There’s a huge amount of material to go through within a short period of time, but I still enjoy it,” he says with a smile.

In the realm of high-tech, **Prof. Siu Wan-chi**, Head of PolyU’s Electronic and Information Engineering Department agrees students have heavy workloads, but it is essential they have the most up-to-date knowledge in order to do their work.

In July last year the department changed its name from Electronic Engineering to Electronic and Information Engineering, a redefinition which Prof. Siu believes accurately describes what the PolyU is doing in the exciting field of information technology.

“Electronic engineering used to be only about pure computers, emphasizing more on hardware, but with the overwhelming demand of information, storage of data, transfer, retrieval, we offer information technology unlike some universities which stick to conventions,” explains Prof. Siu.

With the shift away from the actual machines to networking and data manipulation, the department established a wide range of electives for students to choose from. “We have five different streams: electronic design, telecommunications engineering, computer engineering, information engineering and multimedia application. The students choose one stream and from there combine courses with what they want to do. It’s no good choosing randomly otherwise you come out after three years and won’t be good for anything,” warns Prof. Siu.

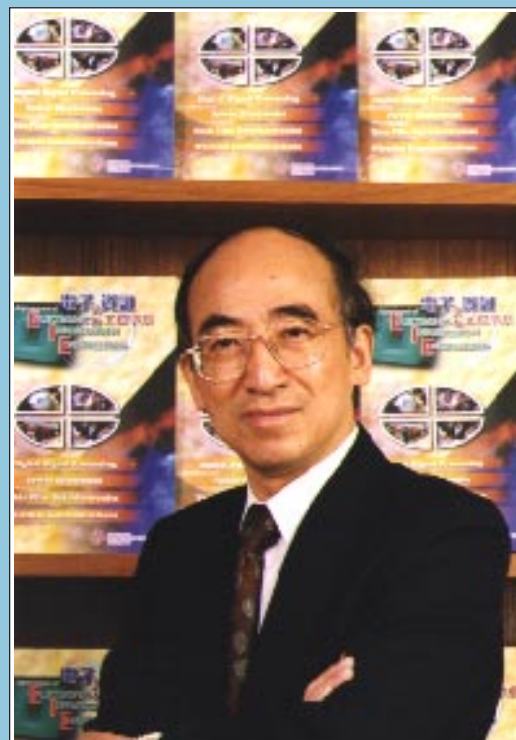
He adds that the electives are demanding, requiring a strong physics and mathematics background. However, in the end students are practically guaranteed a job after graduation. “People with technical knowledge are difficult to find, but society needs these people because everyone is working with computers.”

Another reason why PolyU students do well in the workplace is due to their preparation for life after tertiary education. Employers particularly note how well PolyU students perform in interviews and this may be directly due to the efforts of the Student Affairs Office of the University.

**Franky Wong**, Executive Director of *CY Leung & Company Limited*, observed PolyU students to be technical-oriented, leading them to specialize mainly in evaluation of real estate and they are familiar with the techniques involved before joining the company. “Overall they live up to our expectations,” says Wong. “Very few disappoint.”



*Mr. Simon Cheung Yan-kit, second-year student, Department of Accounting*



*Prof. Siu Wan-chi, Chair Professor of Information Engineering and Head of Electronic and Information Engineering*

Similar observation was made by **Florence Chan**, Partner of *Ernst & Young*, who said that PolyU students were highly trained in accounting. Many summer interns and later employees came from the PolyU.

**Dorinda Fung**, PolyU's Assistant Director of Student Affairs (Counselling Services), says around 70 per cent (3,000) of the final-year students, come for help in career orientation and job hunting tips. "We run mock interviews, simulating a real situation," she explains. "Usually a counsellor, an alumnus and an academic staff member participate in the interview. We go through about 350 students and give them feedback and debriefing."

But preparation for the workplace is not the only function of the Student Affairs Office. "We want the students to have aspiration, value, interest and personality on top of the technical skills," explains Mrs. Fung.

As a result, during their three years, the students' curriculum is peppered with classes on career orientation, market outlook, strategies and self-understanding. "We help them to plan earlier, let them ask themselves why they are choosing these activities and work on their strengths and weaknesses," she says.

The Student Affairs Office is also responsible for implementing the "Preferred Graduate" Development Programme in order to prepare more "ready-to-work" graduates.

Here PolyU students in their second year work in Partner Companies for two to three months. Employers cover basic expenses, such as travelling expenses, while providing on-the-job training. Not only does this give students an opportunity to be exposed to the workplace and apply what they have learned in the classroom, but also the possibility of a permanent position after graduation.

"The Programme gives the students training to excel in their work. We hold a debriefing afterwards to find out what they've learned over the summer placements," adds Mrs. Fung.

Despite the knowledge they have attained, both employers Ms. Chan and Mr. Wong note PolyU students to be perhaps a bit too technical. In Ms. Chan's case, the accounting firm not only performs audits for clients, but in order to stay competitive, offers advice on finance and investment to their customers. "The exposure of PolyU students is limited in certain areas because they are already specializing; we are not just looking for accountants, but general business advisers," says Ms. Chan.

As for the real estate industry, Mr. Wong finds the students hardworking and quite knowledgeable, "but the problem is that they don't know much about the real world. In our case, they need to know what the property market is doing – lecturers need to play a more active role, perhaps taking the students to see at least one land auction so that they can be exposed to what the market is."

Ms. Chan and Mr. Wong also lament the dropping standard of English from all university students. In both areas, students need to



**Mr. Franky Wong, Executive Director, C.Y. Leung & Company Limited**



**Ms. Florence Chan, Partner, Ernst & Young**



communicate with clients and colleagues to get work done and lacking the language skills necessary makes the job more difficult for them.

“We are aware of the problem of English,” says Mrs. Fung. “Students need to be culturally and linguistically versatile so that they will have an edge. The demands on them are enormous and tougher.”

Prof. Siu puts it simply: “With regards to English, the culture needs to change and start with the secondary schools education system and language teachers. It’s rather common in Hong Kong that people read Chinese newspapers, speak Cantonese and write in English.

“We take every opportunity to remind students that Chinese and English is our dress and if you can’t dress up, you can’t sell yourself,” he continues. “We tell them to read, write a report and then make a presentation, and the department helps recruit language tutors to go over their work one on one or in a small group. This is important because in the future our students will be in touch with people. Not only do they have to have the technical skills, but also the management skills and be able to communicate their knowledge to others.”

With so many necessary skills needed these days, it can be scary for students to find a job. Not so for **Cindy Chan Yuen-kwan**, though. The 22-year-old fresh graduate from building surveying has already found a job in property management. Having worked in the past two summers, she finds the experience definitely an asset in preparing herself for the real working world. “It does make a difference having been involved in the actual operation of business. Knowledge learned from books becomes alive when put into a working environment. The summer jobs have certainly broadened my horizons and given me insights.”

A keen supporter of the “Preferred Graduates” Development Programme, Miss Chan realizes the importance of applying theories to practice. She also knows the power of “packaging” in job hunting. “The courses provided by our Student Affairs Office help a lot. Those that I’ve taken, on writing job application letters and group interviews, have proved to be extremely useful since I started to look for a job.”

In retrospect, she feels, however, that it would have increased her competitiveness in the job market if she had exposure to site inspection and more training at the Industrial Centre on campus.

As for Simon Cheung, his hard work has paid off as he was offered not only one of three scholarships from *Arthur Andersen*, but also an opportunity to work in the firm for two weeks this summer.

“Having that chance is a definite advantage. I am optimistic about the future,” he says. “The economic situation is not good this year and the recession may still continue for some time. Students cannot change the economic situation so they have to prepare themselves with part-time job experience, better academic performance and job seeking skills.”

It may be a sobering realization of what students face after graduation, but at least with the PolyU behind them, graduates have a higher chance of attaining their career goals.



*Mrs. Dorinda Fung Chan Man-chi, Assistant Director, Student Affairs*



*Miss Cindy Chan Yuen-kwan, graduating student, Department of Building and Real Estate*

# 扶掖人才 為港將來

大學畢業後要覓得一份理想工作毫不容易；然而，這份苦差對理大學生而言，相信不一定如想像中困難，因他們不僅擁有專業的知識與技能，而且富有相關的實際工作經驗，堪稱具備「實用價值」。

據 AC 尼爾森一項獨立的專業調查報告指出，大多數受訪公司均認為理大畢業生所具備的實用價值為同儕之冠，並盛讚理大畢業生兼具切合社會所需的專業技能與知識，同學都能學以致用，一展所長。

理大設有六所學院，其下包括二十六個學系、三個中心，提供的課程不但多元化，亦以其獨特性見稱。現時，理大是本地唯一提供時裝設計、物理治療、屋宇設備工程學及眼科視光學等課程的專上學府，讓畢業同學在求職時獨佔優勢。豐富充實的教材在三年的學士學位課程緊接傳授，內容盡量切合僱主的實際需要。

現年二十歲的會計學系二年級學生張人傑同學，早在就讀中六時已接觸這門學科，並立志投身會計行業。他表示今年的學習生涯相當艱辛。

「今年二年級的會計學課程包括多個專業學科，如稅務、市場、管理及金融會計。」張同學續稱：「我們必須具備基本會計知識，並能按香港的情況準則預備帳目，可說極富挑戰性。今年的課程較我預期中困難，我們必須在短期內吸收大量教材，但我很享受箇中的學習趣味。」回味之際，張同學略帶微笑。

電子資訊工程學系講座教授兼系主任蕭允治教授同意學生在現今高科技的領域功課繁重，不過這是必須的，因他們要不斷尋求最新的知識以應付日後的工作需要。

去年七月，該學系由電子工程學系改名為電子及資訊工程學系，蕭教授深信這重新釋義更能確切地闡明理工大學矢志推動資訊科技不斷發展。

蕭教授解說：「過去電子工程教學慣常只包括純電子計算，側重硬件研究。現時，為配合工商界對資訊科技、儲存、轉調及讀取資料庫等殷切需求，我們提供的資訊科技課程研究，有別於墨守成規的大學。」

由實際的機械運作轉變到著重電腦網絡系統及資料操控，該學系開辦多元化的選修課程讓同學選擇。

蕭教授指出：「我們分設五個不同學術範疇，計有電子設計、電訊工程、電腦工程、資訊工程及多媒體應用。同學可按日後工作興趣選修其中一個範疇以配合其他不同課程。不過，選讀課程須審慎得宜，否則三年後畢業可沒任何得著。」

他補充說修讀選修課程的要求甚嚴，同學必須具備良好的物理及數學基礎。然而，因「各行各業漸倚重電腦，科技專才難求」，同學們畢業後均能確保覓得理想工作。

理大學生在工作崗位上有出色表現的另一原因，是他們能及早不斷充實自我，為未來人生作好準備。僱主尤其盛讚理大學生在面試時有極佳表現，這與大學學生事務處一連串的工作不無關係。

梁振英測量師行執行董事黃錫興表示理大畢業生有一獨特性，就是深具實用價值，他們擁有房地產評估的專門知識，並在入職前已掌握相關的實際工作技能。

黃先生表示：「整體而言，理大畢業生工作表現均達到我們預期的水準，名實相符，絕少教人失望。」

安永會計師事務所合伙人陳苑芬有同樣的評價，她稱理大會計學系的畢業生都經過嚴謹及專業的會計訓練，而該公司許多暑期實習生（後來並成為僱員）均來自理大。

學生事務處副處長（輔導部）馮陳敏慈表示，約三千名理大準畢業生（約佔總數百分之七十）有參加該處所舉辦的就業輔導及求職要訣等活動。

她說：「本處積極為學生提供模擬面試，通常由本處

輔導主任、校友及教職員各一名參與，先後共為三百五十名學生進行模擬面試，並在事後給學生回應及報告。」

馮太續稱為同學未來工作作好準備並非學生事務處的唯一工作：「我們最終希望同學們除掌握專業技能外，亦兼具個人抱負、價值觀、興趣及高尚的品格。」

有見及此，在三年的學術課程亦加添就業輔導、市場前景探討、對策及自我認識等項目。馮太指出：「我們希望同學們能預早計劃準備，讓他們清楚參加活動的目的，協助學生達致個人成長，盡展所長。」

學生事務處亦負責推行「首選畢業生培育計劃」，為僱主栽培他們樂於僱用的優質畢業生。該計劃安排參加的二年級學生，在暑假到參與計劃之夥伴公司，接受兩至三個月與其所讀專業有關的在職訓練。夥伴公司支付基本費用如交通費等，並為學員提供訓練。同學們不但可在實際的工作環境學以致用，積聚寶貴工作經驗，而且可能因此覓得畢業後的理想工作。

馮太表示：「該計劃給學生一個難得的機會盡量發揮，我們在實習過後會和學生作出檢討，了解他們的工作經驗及得益。」

儘管理大學生擁有相當專業知識，陳苑芬女士及黃錫興先生均察覺到他們也許過於側重技術性。陳女士指出一所會計公司不僅為顧客提供核數服務，在面對同行激烈的競爭下，公司更要提供財務投資顧問服務。

陳女士表示：「理大學生因太專業化，他們的見識只局限於某幾個範疇。而我們要求的不僅是會計師，更需要一般商務的顧問。」

在房地產業，黃先生認為理大學生均努力工作，及富有專業知識。但他指出一個通病，就是畢業生對實際環境的認知不夠深入。他們必須清楚房地產市場的動向。這方面大學講師須扮演一個較主動的角色，例如帶領同學們參觀最少一次土地拍賣，以助他們理解市場的運作。

陳女士及黃先生二人同時對大學生英語水平普遍下降到惋惜。在這兩個行業工作，既要與同僚緊密合作，又要與顧客溝通，缺乏語文運用技巧將大大影響工作的表現。

馮陳敏慈指出：「我們自然關注到學生英語水平的問

題。大學生需在文化認知及語言方面達到一定水平，才能在激烈的競爭中獨佔優勢，脫穎而出。」

蕭允治教授簡單地說：「關於這個問題，得由整體文化著眼，從中學的教育制度及語文老師開始改變。香港人一般讀中文報紙，說廣東話，寫英文。」

他續稱：「我們常提醒學生中英文猶如我們的服飾，不能恰當裝扮，就不能表現自己。同時，我們常要求學生多閱讀、撰寫報告，並作演講。我們學系聘用語文導師進行個人或小組輔導，評閱學生的習作，這是非常重要的；他們日後與他人合作，不但要有專業知識與技能，而且須有管理技能，精通與人溝通之道。」

面對一大堆入職要求，剛踏出校園投入工作世界的畢業生未免感到憂心忡忡。不過，並非人人如此。今年廿二歲建築測量學畢業不久的陳婉君，已覓得一份物業管理工作。她稱過去兩年所獲得的寶貴暑期工作經驗，使她認識到實際工作需要，獲益良多。陳校友謂：「暑期工作不但使我增廣見聞，且能活學活用，給我許多啟發。」

陳校友絕對支持母校推行「首選畢業生培育計劃」，讓同學學以致用。同時，她深信求職時懂得如何自我「包裝」，能大大增加受聘的機會。「學生事務處所舉辦的多元化課程十分管用。我曾參加的求職信工作坊及小組面試技巧等課程，對我求職時有很大幫助。」回想起來，陳婉君認為如她在學時能多到地盤作實地考察及加強在大學工業中心的訓練，必能增加在市場求職的競爭力。

至於張人傑同學，他的努力並沒有白費；今年他不但榮獲Arthur Anderson頒贈獎學金，更可在暑假期間到該公司實習，為期兩個月。張同學興奮地說：「今年暑假有這個良機，對我來說實有莫大裨益；我對前景甚表樂觀。」

他又補充說：「今年的經濟困境可能仍然持續。同學們雖不能改變經濟氣候，但可預早作好準備，吸取假期的工作經驗，在學術上爭取更佳的表现，以及學習求職技巧。」

同學畢業後也許要面對嚴峻的現實考驗；然而理大畢業生既有大學多方面的支持，應有較佳機會達成個人的事業目標。

