

## A lifetime's dedication

Peter Poon, a founding member of the Hong Kong Society of Accountants, can look back with satisfaction at the growth of the accounting profession over the past three decades. "When I started work, there were very few locally trained accountants," he recalls. "In the 1950s and 1960s people had few choices and not many were able to go abroad to qualify. Foreign staff dominated the Inland Revenue Department. We realised there weren't enough accountants to serve Hong Kong's growing economy."

A few senior accountants, led by Sir Gordon Macwhinnie, had the vision to establish a local qualification system. Poon looked at accountancy bodies around the world, gathering ideas for the constitution, and the training and development requirements for the proposed new body. This led to the formation of the Hong Kong Society of Accountants in 1973. In the very beginning, the HKSA turned to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales for advice in setting examination systems. "That was the first thing we got right," he says.

As the HKSA grew, Poon sat on a number of government committees and also served in the Legislative Council for eight years, one of the first accountants to do so. Poon credits his wife Theresa, also a qualified accountant, for "minding the store" of his CPA firm during these challenging times.

Behind the modesty, Poon is proud that the Institute was able to establish its statutory role in the early days while balancing the representation of practising and non-practising accountants. "We were able to bring together professional, business and academic interests under one body," he says. "Some other countries were unable to do that. We've been lucky to have so many strong presidents and able registrars to serve our interests."

Poon has been impressed by the recent transformation of the HKSA to the Hong Kong Institute of CPAs. "We now have an excellent, established qualification programme, which will be at the forefront of our future development," he says. "The new generation is so bright. In one day they can pick up what it took us a week to learn. And they are committed to lifetime learning."

Not that Poon is any slouch himself. "I still attend CPD classes," he admits. "After all, I don't want to lose my practising certificate!"

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**Peter Poon Wing Cheung, OBE**  
senior partner, Poon & Co.