

Successful graduate

QP paves the way for a smooth career transition.

Mandy Lau has a lot on her plate working for the government. She finds the skills she learned from QP are a big help.

Versatile role

Life is a lot more varied than it used to be for Mandy Lau. As accounting officer for The Treasury in the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, she is called on to deal with all sorts of colleagues, from all sorts of departments, at all sorts of levels of seniority, as well as numerous external organizations of various shapes and sizes. It is a role for which her QP studies have stood her in good stead.

The Treasury has a policy of rotating its staff around different government departments every two to three years; Lau has been working for the Department of Health since she joined in July 2008. Her role there is outward-facing as much as it is inward-facing. "I mainly deal with accounting-related issues for non-governmental organizations (NGOs)," she says. "The government gives large sums of money every year to NGOs to provide different medical and welfare programmes. NGOs that have accounting problems will ask for our advice. My job is to make sure that the government funding is used effectively. And to make sure those public funds are used efficiently, we have to review many regulations – a huge number, from various bureaus and departments. We have to think critically about whether money is being used effectively, and often take some legal advice if the users seem not to comply with the regulations."

Lau worked for a Big Four firm before entering the public sector, as a senior tax consultant after graduation in 2004. She says that her new role is far more multi-faceted than her old one. "Switching from practicing field to the government was a big challenge for me. The working environment and the challenges I face are totally different, but after two years, I have adapted. Thanks to the QP, its practical and comprehensive training equips me with diversified skill sets that can be applied to any workplace."



Graduate profile

Name	: Mandy Lau
QP graduation	: December 2006
Education	: Bachelor of business administration in accountancy, City University of Hong Kong
Job title	: Accounting officer
Company	: The Treasury, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Past experience	: Senior tax consultant, PricewaterhouseCoopers
Hobby	: Cooking

Communication is key

Lau began her accountancy studies when she was at City University of Hong Kong, having been in two minds about her preferred academic and professional path when she was young. "I was in the arts stream at school, but I always had a great interest in mathematics and economics," she says. "I like doing calculation a lot. I find there is also a good job market and job security in accountancy."

Once she decided that accountancy was the right profession for her, and completed her university studies in the subject, it was a logical next step to study through QP. "QP was relatively new when I graduated in 2004, and some of my classmates hesitated because of its open-book examination format which is different from everything we had ever experienced in a traditional examination," she says.

But QP's relevance and credibility in the workplace made it a simple decision for her to study for the qualification. "For me, I took QP because of the international recognition – I realized that the programme is recognized in a lot of countries," says Lau. "Taking on QP is the first step to embark on accountancy profession."

While the knowledge she acquired during her QP studies was useful, she says that less tangible communication skills she picked up are also crucial because of the way the programme is structured, with the interactive workshops an important part of QP. "The workshops benefit us a lot," she says. "We had to discuss case problems, analyse them from all round perspectives and then come up with practical solutions. Through doing presentations, we became more confident in expressing our ideas to partners and colleagues. I have to deal with many different classes of colleagues in the government, so presentation and communication skills that I polished during QP workshops are very valuable. Accounting standards may be updated every few years, but those kinds of skills benefit me for life."

Tips for students:

- Start studying the QP materials earlier and never leave your revision until the last minute.
- Practise relevant past examination papers and make sure you can manage your time properly.
- Form a study group with your peers to share knowledge and tackle difficulties together.



Interview and reporting by Richard Lord