

Successful graduate

An education for education

Working in university finance is a multi-faceted challenge for Winnie Lee – one for which QP provides the perfect preparation.

People power

Interpersonal skills are at the heart of Winnie Lee's job. Lee works as an executive officer in the 80-strong finance office of her own alma mater, City University of Hong Kong, a position equivalent to an accounting officer. There, she performs tasks including budgetary control and financial reporting on the university-funded projects, as well as its operations in mainland China.

Like many in the accounting profession, she started out her career as an auditor. In her case, she worked for a leading local firm RSM Nelson Wheeler for nearly three years before transferring to the tertiary education sector, first with The Chinese University of Hong Kong where she continued to work as an internal auditor, and then with City University where her role changed. Like many, she found her work as an auditor very rewarding and a useful way to start her career, but eventually she felt the need to step out from her comfort zone. "One of the reasons I changed was to extend my horizon in the accounting world," she says. "After several years of working experience in CPA firms, I was quite confident I have equipped myself with the necessary skills. The tertiary education sector is very stable, and the time I work is better."

The time pressure might not be so severe, but Lee's work in the education sector is definitely more varied, and means that she has to tackle all sorts of new challenges. "One very different aspect is that I need to handle tasks individually, delegate tasks to subordinates and monitor their progress simultaneously," she says. "I also have very close contact with colleagues in the finance department, and in other departments that provide administrative support, as well as with the government funding sector."

Lee studied accountancy at City University, after realising early in life that accountancy would be the right career for her. "Before entering university, the idea of going into the accounting profession gave me a very strong feeling about the professional path I was taking – that I would acquire a lot of useful technical skills, and that the time and effort would all be worthwhile," she comments.



Graduate profile

Name	: Winnie Lee
QP graduation	: December 2007
Education	: Bachelor of business administration in accountancy, City University of Hong Kong
Job title	: Executive officer, finance office
Company	: City University of Hong Kong
Past experience	: - Senior auditor (audit unit), RSM Nelson Wheeler - Senior associate (mergers and acquisitions unit), RSM Nelson Wheeler - Internal auditor, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Hobbies	: Running, salsa dancing and voluntary services

Thinking, not just remembering

The decision to study QP after graduating, she says, was a tough one to make. “I knew that if I wanted to pursue an accountancy career, I needed the right knowledge and the right qualification – and there are various professional accounting examinations, so it was a difficult decision.”

She made the choice she did, she adds, because of the unique style of learning QP offers – one that she feels is by far the most relevant to the skills that are needed by accountants in the workplace. “Other qualifications put a lot of emphasis on rote-learning, and a lot of it was of little relevance. But QP’s case study approach, its open-book examinations and its interactive workshops are great. Students are provided with opportunities to strengthen their abilities in problem solving, presentation and team building. All its training puts the emphasis much more on thinking rather than remembering. That is more like the focus that you have to have in a workplace – it is about analytical skills and interacting with other people.”

After all, there is no need to memorize information that is always on hand – and so rote-learning is far less useful than knowing what to do with that information. Lee says she was surprised by how useful the course turned out to be. “QP actually is very helpful to my career development. I am trained to be an all-round professional and I can manage different kinds of work challenges. The confidence it gave me in networking was also invaluable. The QP workshops featured candidates from so many backgrounds and fields. People come from lots of angles when they look at problems – there are always lots of different solutions to the same problem.”

Tips for QP graduates looking to choose an employer:

- Consider your career prospects and how your job portfolio can be enriched.
- Keep up-to-date of market trends in different industries and select a company in which you can achieve your career goal.
- Keep in mind that the salary package is not always the most important thing. A company which offers a doorway to a good industry is worth more.



Interview and reporting by Richard Lord