

Successful graduate

Fired up by finance

QP creates a fast route for Gaston Cheung to enter the world of financial services.

Flying start

Gaston Cheung, assistant vice president of fund administration and finance of Sun Hung Kai Securities Limited, has always relished a challenge. These days he works in the challenging world of finance – but he says that it was his knowledge of accountancy, bolstered by QP, that launched him down that path. “QP helps me a lot in consolidating my accountancy knowledge and business management skills – it was a fast-track ticket for me to enter the financial industry.”

“During my senior secondary education, I specialized in mathematics. At that time, I found accountancy to be a rewarding and stable career, which attracted me,” he says. “Some people might think that it is not an easy path as you need to attempt quite a few professional examinations after university and even need to continue professional learning for the rest of your career. But to me, I enjoy the challenges and life-long learning opportunities. Secondly, I have found that accountancy is quite a challenging and interesting career. It is the most basic language – any aspect of businesses relates back to accounting. So I decided to pursue accountancy as my career.”

Cheung studied both accountancy and management information systems at City University of Hong Kong. “I am a person who is willing to accept challenges, so I wanted to do a double major at university,” he says. Fortunately the subjects dovetailed pretty neatly. “Management information systems is all about the operations of the company, so a large part of the two subjects are similar.”

Perfect programme

After graduating from university in 2006, Cheung worked at HSBC Securities Services, staying there until he moved to Sun Hung Kai Securities last year. At the same time, he studied QP, which he says was a natural choice for him. “I think there is no doubt that QP is a renowned CPA programme among employers and graduates. It is also tailor-made for Hong Kong’s business environment.”

It is not just QP’s local relevance and global recognition that make it the preferred accountancy qualification for graduates, he adds – the nature of the QP training also means that it provides ideal preparation for young prospective accountants. “QP provides students with all-rounded training. It emphasises teaching students to analyze issues from different angles and applying knowledge practically in daily work. The approach is quite different from other accountancy qualifications, especially because of QP’s training of critical thinking. When going through QP’s open-book examinations, students are asked to identify key issues, digest the information accessed, and propose an appropriate solution.”



Graduate profile

Name	: Gaston Cheung
QP graduation	: December 2010
Education	: Bachelor of business administration in accountancy and management information systems, City University of Hong Kong
Job title	: Assistant vice president, fund administration and finance
Company	: Sun Hung Kai Securities Limited
Past experience	: Senior fund accountant, HSBC Securities Services

“Furthermore, QP highlights relevance and updates. There are new accounting and auditing standards every year. To study QP, you are trained to be up to date with the latest regulations.”

Cheung says that the two companies he has worked for are quite similar. “Both companies have strong compliance procedures. Since the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, the finance industry and government have put more emphasis on reporting and financial regulations. QP’s training has helped me a lot in soft skills such as analytical, communication, presentation, and leadership skills.”

He moved on from HSBC Securities Services, he adds, so that he could focus more clearly on certain specific financial products. “Working at HSBC provided me with broad knowledge about funds. Then I realized that it was time for me to develop a specific focus in my career. My current company is developing specific products, such as mutual funds and discretionary accounts, so I will have a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of particular financial products.”

How young graduates are equipping themselves for job opportunities?

- Facing keen competition in a competitive job market, young graduates need to highlight both their academic and non-academic strengths and relevant working experience when interviewing with potential employers.
- Focus on long-term career opportunities and development that potential employers provide instead of short-term monetary rewards.
- Keep technical knowledge up-to-date and enhance problem-solving and presentation skills.



Interview and reporting by Richard Lord