

Multi-tasking on the QP

Nelson Lam has a full-time position as a CPA but still finds time to act as a QP workshop facilitator and observer as well as an authorised supervisor. Mr Lam explains why he is so committed to the HKSA's Qualification Programme

‘QP workshop facilitator’ may sound like management speak for a teacher or lecturer, but in fact, due to the workshop structure, the skills needed to be a good facilitator are very different to those required by a teacher. Nelson Lam has been serving as a workshop facilitator for nearly four years and is amply qualified to explain the difference: ‘As a lecturer one simply needs to convey a certain amount of information from pre-prepared materials. As a facilitator in a workshop the approach is different. The workshop aims to simulate a real-life situation, and the facilitator aims to guide the students into arriving at a solution through discussion.’

Mr Lam says that to be a good facilitator, one must have good listening skills and be experienced enough to ask the sort of questions that will stimulate further discussion. ‘Providing balance is also important,’ says Mr Lam. ‘Some students are naturally more passive than others but to be sure that they benefit as much as the more confident students, the facilitator must encourage them to participate fully. At the same time as allowing the maximum interaction, the facilitator must be deft enough to keep the conversations focused on the issues at hand.’



I have certainly benefited in a number of ways

To be really good at something it is important to enjoy it. Mr Lam claims he gets a great deal of satisfaction from his role as facilitator. ‘The workshop environment confirms the Confucian view that both the teacher or, in this instance, the facilitator, can learn from their interaction. I have really learned a lot from the process. Beyond that there is great satisfaction to be gained from seeing your students learn and make progress,’ says Mr Lam proudly. ‘Finally, it is simply a thrill to be among a group of energetic, enthusiastic prospective accountants. They are the future of our profession.’

Quality control

As part of its ongoing quality assurance the HKSA employs workshop observers to report on the quality of the workshops and their facilitators. Mr Lam was appointed as a workshop observer in 2002, and here provides some insight into the process: ‘In fact, HKSA provides specific guidelines for us to check against when observing our fellow facilitators. This approach not only standardises our processes and measurement criteria but also derives the greatest benefits to our students,’ he says. ‘Personally, I try to see the effectiveness of the workshop from the students’ point of view – that is to be sure that there is an interactive and effective learning environment has been created.’

Not only has Mr Lam taken on the roles of facilitator and observer, he also finds time to be an Authorised Supervisor. ‘The role of an Authorised Supervisor

recognises the fact that prospective accountants need to gain competency as well as experience. I have taken on the role of an Authorised Supervisor because although I am a full time accountant with a professional CPA firm, one of my duties is to train my colleagues. This area of my work has benefited greatly from HKSA’s guidelines and training for Authorised Supervisors and in turn, the advantages I have gained are passed on to my colleagues who benefit directly from what I have learned,’ he says.

Benefits are felt both ways

As a responsible professional accountant Mr Lam has embraced his role in the QP, with the aim of assisting young prospective accountants. He is happy to admit, however, that he has benefited almost as much as the students.

‘Unfortunately for me, I qualified as an accountant before the QP existed. But, by aligning myself with QP through the work that I do for the Society, I have certainly benefited in a number of ways. A personal benefit is the friends I have made with students and other facilitators, giving me access to a wonderful network within the profession. And from a professional viewpoint my involvement in QP training means that I, in common with the students, stay abreast of the latest developments in our profession.’ Mr Lam is also rewarded with CPD points for the work he does. I have never feared that I would not gain sufficient CPD points at year-end since I started participating in QP,’ he laughs.

Mr Lam has always been generous with his time, as a result he has reaped what he sowed in terms of professional excellence and a large number of convivial friends. He is anxious to recommend that his fellow members at HKSA give serious consideration to following in his footsteps. ‘I would encourage my fellow members to consider becoming a workshop facilitator or registering as an Authorised Supervisor or Authorised Employer – really, the extra time needed to be an Authorised Supervisor is quite minimal but the benefits are great. Imagine making friends and updating your technical efficiency, while ensuring the ability of a new generation of professional accountants all at the same time. You can’t beat it for personal development.’