

# Students shine in business case contest

Sponsored Feature

## Winners apply classroom learning

Aptly reflecting the diverse skills and competencies needed by CPAs in the "Accounting Plus" era, the winning team in the HKICPA Business Case Competition 2018 came from the University of Hong Kong. The various team members study accounting, civil engineering and arts subjects.

Team spokesperson Dong Hanzhen said the competition had helped to boost their confidence and enhanced their understanding of "Accounting Plus".

"At school, we pick up technical skills and knowledge, but this contest gave us the opportunity to apply them in a case study scenario. Taking part helped us to link up all the relevant knowledge and skills by looking at the profit and loss statements and other documents and having to formulate solutions. The experience will certainly be helpful for our future careers."

Fellow team member Gao Mingyuan noted that the benefit of having to present their solutions in something like a real-life business setting and the feedback received from the judges. "This gave us a taste of the stringent requirements expected in the workplace and made us more detail-oriented," Gao said.

Zhang Ke noted that the team also learned a lot from each other. "In the business case analysis, we had the diverse perspectives of students from different disciplines, and we learned about critical and analytical thinking by listening to one another."

Luo Rui of Nankai University in Tianjin, who was named the Best Presenter, said she prepared for the competition by getting advice from former contestants at her university.

"For me, the contest was not unlike a public speaking competition," she said. "I paid attention to time management and focused on highlighting our key points. The judges had to listen to 12 presentations, so I made a special effort to capture their attention with appropriate gestures."



Winners of HKICPA Business Case Competition, pictured with judges.

Although Hong Kong's fitness industry is enjoying steady growth driven by the public's increasing health consciousness, a well-established home-grown chain of fitness centres faces the dilemma of whether to diversify into overseas markets or strengthen competitiveness locally by upgrading its facilities.

This was the scenario put before the 12 teams which made the final of the HKICPA (Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants) Business Case Competition 2018. Their task was to act as business consultants, providing innovative solutions in step with the outlook and principles of the "Accounting Plus" era. That meant undertaking financial analysis, as well as formulating creative, holistic business strategies which were backed up by numbers and took due consideration of specific needs and customer requirements relevant to the case at hand.

The participants were university students from the Greater China region, who also showed they were tech-savvy and put forward innovative ideas about enhancing revenue streams and taking advantage of cutting-edge IT solutions.

Organised by the HKICPA, the competition used a rigorous process in selecting the 12 finalists. More than 630 teams from across the Greater China region originally entered the competition, with each asked to submit a written case analysis. A panel of 97 reviewers, made up of accounting professionals and academics, then conducted two rounds of blind reviews before shortlisting the finalists.

Overall, the competition sought to demonstrate the need for CPAs in the "Accounting Plus" era to contribute to the business growth of organisations they work for. This is done not just by applying their technical knowledge, but also by using their "higher-order" abilities and soft skills. Importantly, the

participating students also gained a better understanding of the all-round skills and aptitudes needed to pursue a successful career as a CPA.

"In the ever-changing business sector, which is now driven by disruptive technologies like big data, analytics and other digital solutions, CPAs are involved in strategic developments and expected to give insights based on careful financial analysis," says HKICPA president Eric Tong. "In the business case about the fitness chain, we wanted the students to develop creative solutions, inspired by customer needs and backed up by analysis. Their broad aim was to transform non-profitable elements of the business into profit-making ones and to identify new opportunities. They also had to understand the needs and wants of different market segments."

Tong was pleased to see that participants adopted the analytical learning style set out in the new Qualification Programme (QP) to develop their business solutions.

In fact, the contest's case study was designed in part to make students more familiar with the QP. It is a holistic training platform that teaches the essential foundation skills for accounting and cultivates the higher-order competencies needed by future CPAs. To ensure it keeps pace with change, the Institute plans to launch an updated QP in 2020.

HKICPA vice-president Patrick Law noted that the contest was a good way for students to hone their all-round abilities.

"The competition, now in its 16th year, continues evolving," he said. "Today's CPAs need more than just hard accounting skills and knowledge, so the contest encourages students to apply what they have learned on campus and to use their analytical and critical thinking skills. At the same time, they can sharpen their communications skills and presentation techniques."

He added that the judges were all experienced professionals in their respective fields, who were ready to offer insightful, practical advice about the students' methods and proposed business solutions.

This year, in view of the fast-paced economic integration of Hong Kong and mainland China plus the development of the Greater Bay Area, the organiser decided to combine and rebrand the previously separate Hong Kong and mainland contests.

"Because the contestants hail from many different cities in China, we see diverse perspectives and contrasting insights," Tong said. "The students also benefit from the opportunity to listen to other groups presenting their unique business models, based on characteristics found in their respective cities."

Tong was particularly impressed by the range of bold and innovative solutions, including digital ideas for developing virtual communities, and the inventive suggestions for achieving commercial viability.

One judge, Charlie Yeung, the financial controller for Pure International (HK), echoed Tong's views.

"The students tended to be forward-looking," he said. "Some paid special attention to the needs of the millennials and their solutions reflected a global perspective."

Law said the winning team impressed him because their presentation was succinct and easy to understand.

"They structured the key points with great clarity," he said. "Besides, instead of reciting a memorised script, they demonstrated eagerness in conveying their ideas and a shared belief in their strategies."

**CPA** Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants  
香港會計師公會



Contest champions: (from left) Yang Chenyu, Zhang Ke, Dong Hanzhen and Gao Mingyuan from the University of Hong Kong.

# 比賽首併大中華區大專生 及早磨練未來會計師

如果你擁有的健身中心旗下有10所分店，但部分持續錄得虧蝕，你會把分店關閉？還是咬緊牙關，了解客戶需要後重組營運策略？香港會計師公會早前舉行第16屆商業個案比賽（前身為專業資格課程（QP）個案分析比賽），超過630隊來自香港及內地（包括澳門）的大專生就這試題進行分析，最終由香港大學隊伍奪得冠軍。

今年商業個案比賽首次以香港及內地（包括澳門）合併方式作賽，經過兩輪評審後選出12強隊伍進入最後的個案分析匯報環節，爭奪今年的冠、亞、季、殿、最佳書面報告和最佳演說等獎項。香港會計師公會會長唐業銓指出，商業世界一直在轉變，為配合市場需要，比賽今年增加了數據分析和大數據等新元素，以考驗一眾未來的會計師們，如何透過比賽好好裝備自己，以應對未來的「Accounting Plus」的新時代。「現今的會計師不再是單純從事傳統的會計工作，我們需要運用會計知識，結合高層次分析技巧及專業技能，將會計服務提升到不同領域，為業務增值。透過案例，我們希望同學可以感受到會計師在商業世界中的實際工作。」

## 匯報技巧必不可缺

今年的比賽案例以健身中心為主題，案例中健身中心部分分店持續錄得虧蝕，從中考驗參賽隊伍如何為虧蝕的分店進行轉型，改變商業策略，改善盈利情況。香港會計師公會副會長羅富源表示，比賽的源由是公會留意到會計師的工作不再單純是數字，因此希望有意投身會計行業的同學能夠透過案例應用他們所學的知識、分析和匯報技巧。「這些技巧都是會計師工作的一部分，我們時常需向董事會匯報，但當中不能只依賴數字，背後的組織及分析能力同樣重要。」此外，羅富源還希望透過今次比賽的實戰經驗，讓同學未

來投身社會時，進一步提升他們在職場上的表現。

今年比賽首次合併，讓內地及香港學生能夠同場較量。唐業銓指，隨着大灣區規劃陸續出台，很多事情需要內地及香港一併考慮，而正因為兩地的經濟環境不同，來自不同地方的同學在相同的事件上都可能會出現不同的看法。「內地及香港環境不同，學生的思維方式都有不同，但透過比賽，他們能夠從中互相學習，多了解多合作。」

今年大會評審之一、任職 Pure International (HK) Limited 財務總監的楊永泰指，今年來自內地及香港的隊伍都有傑出的表現，而在匯報中的內容亦反映到他們不同的背景。「合併比賽是一件好事，因為參賽學生能夠透過觀摩其他隊伍，從而學習到更多的新事物。」他鼓勵年輕一代，未來須放眼世界，接觸更多新事物。而為配合「Accounting Plus」的新時代，香港會計師公會將於2020年推出全新的專業資格課程（QP），進一步加強會計師的市場觸覺、分析、演講和溝通等技巧，從而促使會計師的專業水平可更上一層樓，為瞬息萬變的商業世界作最佳準備。

## 新舊意念衝擊 帶動啟發創新

今年參賽隊伍表現十分優秀，不但在比賽過程中展現了良好的分析能力，而部分的建議亦極具創意，突破傳統的框架。唐業銓分享道：「很多過往商業世界認為不可行的想法，正正因為年輕一代敢於嘗試，最終成功把意念實踐。」在比賽中，評審聽取了不少創



630隊學生參加香港會計師公會的商業個案比賽，經多重選拔後只有12隊晉身最後階段，並角逐冠、亞、季、殿、最佳書面報告和最佳演說獎項。圖中同學可謂精英中之精英。

新的意念，例如以虛擬實境、手機應用程式等方式在家中進行健身，打破空間的限制。羅富源補充指，新一代年輕人的想法和意念，甚至會為他們帶來一些啟發。

總結整個比賽，唐業銓建議同學細心留意顧客需要及學習區分不同的顧客。「以健身界為例，不同年齡層對健身可能有不同的需要，部分顧客可能為追求健康；亦有部分會視健身為生活態度的一種。」他認為同學可能未有足夠的社會經驗，令部分的商業分析過於依賴數字作支持，而忽略了顧客需要。羅富源補充指：「有部分報告內容列出了大量資料和數字，讓我們難以掌握報告重點，相反，冠軍隊伍的報告簡潔有力，傳遞的信息亦十分清晰。」

## 冠軍隊伍分享

今年的冠軍隊伍中只有2名隊員修讀會計學，其餘2名則分別修讀文學及工程學，但不同的學術背景正正是他們能夠奪冠的關鍵。他們分享指：「開始時的確會擔心沒有會計的知識會很難在比賽中突圍而出，但後來發現持不同背景的隊員能讓我們從不同的角度去思考問題。」透過這個比賽，他們明白到在商業世界中，只會有一次的匯報機會，不再有分數之分，亦只有成功與失敗兩個結果，所以必須掌握每次機會。



▲ 今年的冠軍由來自香港大學的（左起）楊辰昱、張可、董涵真及高銘遠奪得。

## 最佳演說獎得主分享

而今年獲得最佳演說獎的是來自南開大學的羅銳，她認為獲獎關鍵是在於她能以評審的觀點與角度思考問題，並把是次比賽當作是一個演講比賽，在短時間內吸引評審的吸引力。「我們有12支的隊伍，但都匯報相同的案例，所以要思考以甚麼方法才能引起評審的注意才是致勝關鍵。」



▲ 來自南開大學的羅銳憑着出色的演說技巧，最終奪得最佳演說獎。