Dare to Dream
Ready to Achieve
For someone who had just pulled an all-nighter, HKUST Year Three student Thomas was remarkably energetic and vivacious during his interview, where he told us that his life at HKUST can be summed up in two separate and very different applications of one single word, “union.”

First is the union of cultures. With an Indian father and a French mother, Thomas was born in France and later lived in India. What made him choose a university in Hong Kong?

“I already knew Europe and India well and originally wanted to study in Canada. Hong Kong was my mother’s idea – she thought that studying in a region I knew nothing about would expand my horizons and cultural literacy.” After some extensive research, Thomas decided to leave his comfort zone and attend HKUST.

Among the many universities in Hong Kong, Thomas was most attracted by HKUST’s young and innovative energy. Though only 27 years old, HKUST has already garnered global recognition as a progressive, first-class research university, ranking 2nd in the QS World Young University Rankings and 30th in the 2018 QS World University Rankings, establishing itself among the top universities in the world.

[Continue on Right Page]
The other “union” is one of academic subjects.

Thomas has long loved robotics and the related field of bionics. His initial dream was to study engineering at HKUST, specialize in bionics at the graduate level, then secure a job at a large robotics research firm. “Bionics is a fast-growing field, that integrates biology, mechanics, electronics and control science, and it also involves human physiology and neuroscience. One of its best-known applications is robotic arms. But I realized, when I was applying for universities, that there was not a single undergraduate Bionics program offered by any university in the world,” he said.

As fate would have it, around the time Thomas enrolled, HKUST had just launched the Individualized Interdisciplinary Major (IIM) to let students customize their major courses according to their interests. “As soon as I found out about IIM from an information session, I told my professor I wanted to major in Bionics.” Supported by his professor, Thomas wrote a proposal about his planned course of study, which was accepted by the university. Thomas will graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Bionics, beginning his specialization much sooner than he had planned.

HKUST’s IIM program is the first of its kind among universities in Asia. While it is available only for existing students and not offered as a choice on the university admission application, it fully embodies HKUST’s unique character: flexible, dynamic and student-focused. The program also showcases another HKUST advantage – with just four Schools, namely the School of Science, School of Engineering, School of Business and Management and School of Humanities and Social Science, the University can focus its resources on the development of the four Schools. On top of the close collaboration among Schools, HKUST also has an Interdisciplinary Programs Office that continuously develops new curricula to cater to ever-changing needs.

Talking about his life at HKUST, Thomas said with a laugh, “I am learning Cantonese and local slang by listening to my friends’ banter!” Outside the classroom, Thomas is taking part in the HKUST robot design competition. In fact, he and his teammates have just spent the previous night finishing building the robot that they would enter into this year’s competition. HKUST has more than 100 student societies and associations, allowing its students to pursue their unique interests, or discover new ones through establishing new groups or societies.

Thomas says his next goal is overseas exchange. Like all HKUST students, Thomas can choose from HKUST’s more than 220 international exchange partner institutions and participate in foreign academic exchange for at least one term, while only paying HKUST tuition fees. HKUST also offers a number of international exchange scholarships to encourage students to broaden their worldview.

Thomas admits that IIM is much more challenging compared to traditional undergraduate course work. Is he still happy with his decision to major in Bionics? “Yes, I am a risk taker!” he says, showcasing a fearless love of challenges that is, in fact, the perfect reflection of the HKUST spirit.
If you are looking for a "global citizen," Noa Nederpelt fits the category pretty well. Noa was raised in a multicultural environment with a Venezuelan-Dutch mother and a Dutch-German father in the beautiful city of Barcelona, Spain. She is now a Year Three student at HKUST, majoring in Global Business and Marketing.

Unlike her fellow Europeans who would find Asia a rather unconventional destination for pursuing a university education, Noa had always been interested in the region. "I applied to HKUST on a whim," she explained. "Hong Kong's allure had touched me far before I ever entertained the idea of studying here."

What attracted Noa the most to Hong Kong was the energy and the contrasts. "Hong Kong infuses you with energy and you can't help but feel alive when you first walk among towering glistening skyscrapers and suddenly find yourself a brief escape at a café next to the harbor. This city of contrasts; simple and luxurious, fast and slow, modern and traditional, made me fall in love with it!"

Though making it across two and a half continents to study and live is not easy, Noa is having the time of her life here at HKUST. As a student with a global vision, Noa was excited to study and live in a university with an international ambience and a diverse student body. "I found myself immersed in a culture so different from my own yet so welcoming! I have friends from all over the world - China, Korea, France, Italy, Singapore, the list goes on and on - so no matter if I am studying, working on a project, or eating lunch at the canteen, my mind is constantly broadened through the experiences and thoughts of my friends here."

The endless opportunities and friendly mentors Noa met in HKUST are among the highlights of the past two years. "I have never in my life met so many people, faculty, alumni and fellow students, who were so willing to help me on my journey and figure out my path in life. HKUST has been the most incredible facilitator in this process by offering opportunities of internship, research programs, and entrepreneurship trainings."

Everyone has dreams, but not many have both the drive and the capacity to go after them. Not only does HKUST equip students with skills and knowledge, but it is also a fertile soil for young people to explore and realize their dreams. As Noa puts it, "I don't think there is any place in the world that comes close to providing this uniquely dynamic environment that you can find at HKUST!"
Born in Castelló de la Plana, a coastal city by the Mediterranean Sea in Spain, there is no trace that Fernando is so connected with Chinese culture until he starts speaking fluent Putonghua.

Fernando has been fascinated with Chinese language and culture since he was a child. “To a European, China is a mystery,” he said. Fernando started learning Chinese when he was in primary school and since he was 12, has visited China annually. “I learned Putonghua quite effectively by communicating with the locals,” Fernando explained. He went on to work as an intern in Beijing.

What made him decide to study in Hong Kong? Fernando’s original plan was to study engineering. It was however his passion for China and an adventurous mindset that led him to Hong Kong. “Hong Kong has always been known as a multicultural hub that provides a window to two different worlds: China from the inside and the outside.”

“I came across the Global China Studies Program offered by HKUST when I was choosing a university. It was one-of-a-kind program that provides me with a path to learn about China from a holistic point of view. I like the interdisciplinary nature of the Program that allows me to tackle issues from both the humanities and the social science perspectives.”

While Fernando is currently a student of humanities and social science, he always embraces the opportunities for a well-rounded development. “I would like to be a versatile person with multifaceted skills. One of the reasons I chose HKUST was because of the flexible curriculum; it allows me to do whatever I want, without constraints.” Fernando plans to take minor in engineering, given his science background and interest in the subject as well. He is also a member of many student societies such as Model United Nations, SIGHT and Redbird, all with emphasis on developing different dimensions of students.

Wanting to get the most out of his experience in HKUST, last summer, Fernando had an internship in the New York State Government and travelled to Cambodia to deploy a medical record system in the slums. He is also planning on an exchange program in the coming years. “HKUST is a place where I can achieve my full potential. It provides me with all the tools and resources that make my learning experience challenging but fulfilling at the same time!”
"Energy and environmental issues are some of the biggest problems in my home country and I really want to help solve them." Monica Delucia, a 2016 graduate from Indonesia, explained what made her so determined to choose Environmental Management and Technology (EVMT), a program offered by the Interdisciplinary Programs Office (IPO), as her major in the second year at HKUST.

Monica was admitted to HKUST as an Engineering student, before she realized that her interest was more on the topic of the environment. "The flexibility in program choices at HKUST allowed me to explore different things and pursue what I really wanted." The interdisciplinary and resourceful nature of the program enabled her to address environmental problems from different perspectives. Benefiting from a focused program structure and professional design of the EVMT courses, not only was Monica able to learn from the latest discoveries, theories, and topics from lectures and presentations, but also to connect with the stakeholders and practitioners in the field. Through the EVMT Mentorship Program, Monica met her mentor who was the Director of AECOM, a prominent environment consultancy firm. She was then offered an internship at Kuala Lumpur to assist the Director in advising the Prime Minister of Malaysia on sustainability related issues. The experience opened many doors for her.

It was the close environment in which professors and students exchange ideas and thoughts freely that she enjoyed the most. The strong emphasis on improving communication skills, along with opportunities to work on projects and interact with practitioners on and off campus, have helped Monica greatly improve her interpersonal and presentation skills after 4 years at HKUST.

"Studying in HKUST has exceeded all my expectations of what a university has to offer! The opportunities here are truly infinite and exciting!"

It is Monica's philosophy to practice what she believes. As an environmental advocate, Monica was active in promoting the idea of sustainability on campus. Monica saw that some people threw away reusable items. This led her to volunteer at the "Give-and-Take Campaign" during the mass check-out period in June, encouraging reusing and recycling of second-hand items at the student residential halls. Monica also became the Eco-rep of the Sustainable Campus Leadership Program that designs and undertakes green campus projects to work on a sustainable campus.

Monica aspired to pursue her career in environment or sustainability consultancy after graduation. "I am committed to environmental protection. We should all work together to build a better environment!"
A Drone-inspired STEM Education

ALEX KWOK KA-KIT
BBA in Global Business & Information Systems, Year 3

Alex Kwok has been living a double life. As a Year Three Global Business and Information Systems student, it sounds reasonable that Alex is heading towards banking and finance sector as his career goal. For those who know him, Alex is a drone fanatic.

Alex’s double life is finally merging into one. He formed a team called “Inspire” that recruits university students to teach STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) with drones to secondary and primary school students. “Drones are very effective in inspiring teenagers,” he says. Team Inspire designs STEM focused curricula and programs through which students explore the science of flying drones, the technology that makes them so powerful, the engineering of making them, and use simple mathematics and formula to calculate speed, distance and variables. In a nutshell, it’s a drone-inspired STEM education.

While originally planning to study Engineering, Alex eventually chose a Business major. “I love and enjoy the journey of entrepreneurship, from problem identification to idea incubation, through its realization. It gives me great satisfaction to see and know that my ideas and plan would make an impact.”

Alex is well supported by what he has experienced at HKUST. “HKUST has such an innovative atmosphere, full of energetic students with diverse backgrounds. This inspires my creativity and empowers the success of potential entrepreneurs and dreamers.”

“Drones are an excellent starting point but it won’t be the finishing line of Inspire.” He notes. Alex plans to amplify the impact of Inspire on STEM education in Hong Kong by expanding its tools and audience. “Eventually we hope to drive social innovation by establishing an easily approachable platform to develop hardware and software,” Alex says with a sparkle in his eyes.
Professor King Chow is always on the go. At least, that’s our impression. That’s why whenever we are lucky enough to catch him for a quick chat, we always ask, “What’s new?” Each time without fail, King would tell us about some new idea or new project he’s working on. Each time without fail, we would be excited and invigorated by his passion and energy.

Here is the latest example: the HKUST Interdisciplinary Programs Office, headed by King, recently rolled out Asia’s very first “BSc Individualized Interdisciplinary Major (IIM).” Sounds cool, but what is it? It turns out that the IIM is, indeed, extraordinary. As King explained, “Sometimes students just cannot find a suitable major at the university. With IIM, they can tailor-make their own! Students with specific interest in a subject can design their own major curriculum, and receive guidance from professors across the four Schools at HKUST. We even help students enroll in courses relevant to their self-designed majors offered by other institutions, if those courses are not offered at HKUST.”

Among IIM’s first intake in 2016 is a student expecting what may be the world’s first Bachelor degree in Bionics when he graduates. The inaugural cohort, which only has four students, came up with majors such as Computational Cognitive Science and Bioenergy Management. The creation of these unique and progressive programs reflects not only the true meaning of “interdisciplinary” and “individualized,” but also underscores the flexible, forward-looking teaching approach of the young but ambitious HKUST.
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As a pioneer in cross-generation education, King has spent the last two decades breaking the mold, exploring new academic frontiers and developing new curricula. His lively teaching style has earned him a Michael Gale Medal of Distinguished Teaching at HKUST. “Our ultimate goal is to provide a way for students to discover, and pursue, their true interest.” King himself is the best example of an “interest-led” career path, beginning his studies in cell biology and later switching over to Genetics and Genomics out of sheer passion. “As long as there’s interest, you can switch gears and change fields any time, even after you get a PhD,” he said.

Aside from teaching undergraduate courses and supervising more than a dozen graduate students, King has also been, for the last ten years, the leader and trainer of high-performing HKUST undergraduate teams at the annual International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) Competition at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). “Learning should not be limited to the school campus. Competitions are a great way for students to learn and grow,” he said.

In the past two years, massive open online courses (MOOC) have grown rapidly in participation and popularity. HKUST was the first Asian university to join the Coursera online learning platform in 2011. Always the pacesetter, King designed the online course “The Science of Gastronomy” on the Coursera portal, to date attracting more than 1 million students. He said, “MOOC allows people from all walks of life to access university-level courses, making lifelong learning a reality. Our course has brought together secondary school students, university graduates, archeologists and housewives in discussing recipes!”

King’s influence also extends to upper primary and lower secondary students. Since taking the helm as Director of The Center for the Development of the Gifted and Talented at HKUST, King has redefined the Center’s goals and positioning, proactively raising funds to enhance the teaching of gifted children and support for their parents. “The better parents can understand and accommodate special gifted learning needs, the better they can help their children maximize their innate potential and talent,” King said, highlighting that in their lives, gifted children face many obstacles to holistically fulfilling their full potential. He hopes to lead the Center in gradually removing these obstacles and creating a better environment in which gifted children can learn and grow.

King has been brainstorming, and he hasn’t stopped doing it throughout his more than 20-year teaching stint. From old-fashioned classroom teaching to designing online courses; from helping students create their own majors to nurturing gifted children, King has never stopped looking forward, always keeping his eye on the prize of enhancing the quality of education. After all, as Professor King Chow demonstrates, there is no better way to inspire students across generations and geographic borders to take charge and innovate, than to apply that same can-do spirit to everything one does.
Phillip Chan has been fascinated with robots and turning great ideas into a reality. It was therefore no surprise that he majored in Electronic Engineering at HKUST. “I joined HKUST for the Robotics Team,” Phillip says. He was thrilled when, as a programmer, he helped the team win the top prize at the Hong Kong Robocon Competition and represented Hong Kong in the international competition. He then became the team leader in his sophomore year as the program engineer and team manager. The dual role honed his technical skills while helping him mature into an effective leader. “I had to lead a team of 14. I needed to share my experience, to inspire, motivate and manage the team,” he recalls. It laid the foundation for Phillip’s later endeavors, which culminated in his becoming a co-founder of a technology company.

Inspired by the superhero movie Iron Man, Phillip developed a Wearable Gesture Input Device in the form of a glove for his Final Year Project (FYP). The glove can detect hand movements and could identify...
10 gestures. With the Initial Measurement Unit (IMU) sensor, the glove could recognize leap motions, gestures formed by fingers and both sides of the palm and could work as a controlling mouse with a Bluetooth function.

Now focusing more on the entrepreneurial side, Phillip has chosen to continue his studies at HKUST, enrolling in the MPhil program in Technology Leadership and Entrepreneurship (TLE). There, he met his partners Jitesh Chhabria and Derek Yip. They developed a gadget called "Fit-Kick" which was designed to be wearable on legs, offering virtually assisted training, preventing injury and improving recovery, all through a gamified experience. With bio-mechanical trackers embedded, Fit-Kick can track, record and analyze sports movement. The gadget won them the HKUST Designathon Competition in Dec 2014 and numerous awards in 2015, including the Championship of HKSTP Technopreneur Award (Gold Award) in the YDC E-Challenge 2015.

In 2015, Phillip co-founded "Sensible Dynamics" with Jitesh and Derek. Fit-Kick was rebranded into a software platform 'Koach TV', a smart video fitness platform integrated with smartwatches and gadgets to track users’ exercise progress and give them better insight into their health.

It was Phillip's belief that the world will be better through better use of technology. Phillip and his team recently became one of the HKUST inventors' teams to receive the first Disney-HKUST Grant for Technology and Well-being, which challenges participants to develop creative projects that "improve the lives of people with physical disabilities, support local productivity, or promote health and wellness in affordable ways.”

Among other inventions inspired by the Star Wars franchise, Phillip’s team developed the “Real-time Sign Language Translation Device”, inspired by the hand of C3PO from Star Wars who is “fluent in over six million forms of communication.” Similar to the glove invented for his FYP, the product was designed to translate hand gestures into sound for the speech and language impaired.

From the Robotic Teams to inventing a gesture detecting glove, from "Fit-Kick" to "Koach TV", Phillip may have been inspired by Tony Stark but he is actually living his dream as a young inventor and entrepreneur just like the Iron Man. The robust opportunities in HKUST had strengthened his technical capabilities and Phillip was able to explore and develop his entrepreneurial and leadership side by managing the Robotics Team and putting his own inventions on the market.
Aditya is what one considers as a “model student”. He studies diligently and has been a top student from a young age. He is from India and came to Hong Kong for university education where he continued to do well. He is modest, always reliable and well loved.

He had found an interest in Physics and Mathematics and naturally joined HKUST - a research university rapidly rising in the global academic arena. Now a final year student of the International Research Enrichment Program majoring in Physics and Mathematics and with a focus on academic research, Aditya is moving steadily towards achieving his dream.

Aditya’s academic achievements won him the HKSAR Government’s Scholarship and a number of other scholarships in recognition of his research, including an Honorable Mention in the 2017 Paul and May Chu Physics UG Research Award.

How do you plan to achieve your dream?

The heavy emphasis on research, diverse student population and high quality education at HKUST makes it a very attractive environment for me to study in.

Primarily I hope to gain an overview of my field of interest – cosmology – by engaging in active research at HKUST. I particularly depend on interactions with brilliant professors who are always happy to help and offer guidance.

How would you describe the academic environment at HKUST?

Initially I was admitted to the School of Science. The School offers different major programs and we can pick our favorite ones. We could take up more than one major and even cross-disciplines.

BECOMING AN ACADEMIC

ADITYA VARNA IYER
BSc in Physics (International Research and Enrichment), Year 4

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Can you tell us more about the International Research Enrichment? Cosmology, like most intellectual pursuits, is largely self-driven. However, with the tremendous volume of resources provided by the Physics Department at HKUST, I am one step closer towards this goal. Through the International Research Enrichment (IRE) program I am able to engage in research quite early on.

My engagement in research at McGill University over the summer is an offshoot of being part of the IRE track. Furthermore, the constant support from my supervisor Prof. Wang Yi and my mentor Prof. Szeto has enabled me to gain greater clarity in a subject with a myriad of interesting subfields.

How is your research experience at HKUST? The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) at HKUST during my first summer gave me a taste of the research experience. Ever since then I have found myself involved in projects pertaining to complex systems, biophysics and finally, cosmology which is currently the area I find most fascinating.

How is the non-academic part of your life? I am an HKUST Student Ambassador. Through the Student Ambassador Program I've not only explored every square inch on campus by leading campus tours, but I've also had the wonderful opportunity of travelling abroad to share my experiences. I cannot emphasize enough how much I would miss HKUST and Hong Kong once I graduate.

What is your most memorable experience at HKUST so far? The interesting bit about my life at HKUST is that I have something new to look forward to every year. Among the many memories I cherish are the moments I spent with the friends I met at HKUST. From our first typhoon experience - the most thrilling event that I encountered that year - to hopping across the islands in Sai Kung and camping, I’ve done more than I would have ever dreamed of doing before I came to Hong Kong.

It’s at HKUST that I rediscovered my passion for cooking amidst other interesting experiences, like playing my first musical instrument and most importantly, my desire to become an educator.
Has it ever crossed your mind that doing a PhD immediately after a Bachelor’s Degree is possible? Having majored in Electronic Engineering with a minor in Physics, Gloria Tang is living a dream in which she is going straight to pursue her PhD degree at Harvard University after graduating with a Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering at HKUST.

Born and raised in a family in which both parents are engineers, Gloria has been passionate about science and engineering ever since she was a child. It was therefore no surprise that Gloria chose to study engineering at HKUST.

Like many new students, Gloria’s first year was quite an adventure. Everything was new and fresh to her: the environment, the people, the freedom and the hectic but exciting schedule.
Gloria joined the HKUST Robotics Team as the hardware designer in her first year and had the chance to join the Hong Kong Robocon Contest. Her team won the Robocon that year. Gloria developed an interest in electronic engineering, which became her major, as she applied what she learned into making robots.

Curious souls yearn to explore

In her sophomore year, Gloria joined the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and worked on Hematite Photoelectrode-chemical Water Splitting Cell on Nanophotonic structure under the supervision of Professor Fan Zhi-yong. The project used porous anodic alumina membranes (AAMs) as templates for nanoengineering by properly controlling the anodization conditions and utilizing the nanoimprint technique. It was the first time she had the opportunity to work on a topic of her own interest. The fact that she liked doing scientific research further encouraged her to pursue a dream of doing a PhD after graduation.

Challenges are meant to rouse, not to discourage

The study required a strong physics background so Gloria spent a lot of extra time taking physics lessons to make sure she had acquired the essentials. Her efforts paid off. The study garnered her the Best Final Year Project Award of the Department of Electronic and Computer Engineering and the HKUST President’s Cup Silver Award. The study also paved the way for her future research interests including metamaterial, nanophotonics and photonic crystals.

The turning point for Gloria came in the last year of her study. She went on an exchange program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States for the Spring Semester. Already contemplating pursuing a PhD degree, Gloria made use of the exchange opportunities to visit professors of Harvard University who could be her potential supervisors. With an extraordinary profile of research experiences accumulated at HKUST, Gloria successfully impressed her future mentors and was accepted to the Harvard PhD program.

Gloria’s life at HKUST was not just about studying and research, though her extra-curricular activity was not what one would generally consider as relaxing. She was the co-founder and President of the HKUST Toastmasters Club. “I organized monthly activities and had a lot of opportunities to deliver speeches to various audience, such as high school students, to inspire them to overcome difficulties and fulfill their dreams,” she said. Joining Toastmasters has enhanced her public speaking, communication and leadership skills. Gloria is a native Mandarin and Japanese speaker. She is currently translating an ancient Japanese text into English for a project in Harvard University.

Looking back on her university life in HKUST, Gloria was amazed by the opportunities she had and the accomplishments she has achieved. “I have done everything I could to enrich my university life. At HKUST, I had the freedom to choose and pursue what I really liked. UROP, FYP and exchange opportunities all played significant parts in my university life and paved the way for me to achieve my dream in science.”
For someone who had just pulled an all-nighter, HKUST Year Three student Thomas was remarkably energetic and vivacious during his interview, where he told us that his life at HKUST can be summed up in two separate and very different applications of one single word, “union.”

First is the union of cultures. With an Indian father and a French mother, Thomas was born in France and later lived in India. What made him choose a university in Hong Kong?

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The other “union” is one of academic subjects. Thomas has long loved robotics and the related field of bionics. His initial dream was to study engineering at HKUST, specialize in bionics at the graduate level, then secure a job at a large robotics research firm. “Bionics is a fast-growing field that integrates biology, mechanics, electronics and control science, and it also involves human physiology and neuroscience. One of its best-known applications is robotic arms. But I realized, when I was applying for universities, that there was not a single undergraduate Bionics program offered by any university in the world,” he said.

As fate would have it, around the time Thomas enrolled, HKUST had just launched the Individualized Interdisciplinary Major (IIM) to let students customize their major courses according to their interests. “As soon as I found out about IIM from an information session, I told my professor I wanted to major in Bionics.” Supported by his professor, Thomas wrote a proposal about his planned course of study, which was accepted by the university. Thomas will graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Bionics, beginning his specialization much sooner than he had planned.

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Talking about his life at HKUST, Thomas said with a laugh, “I am learning Cantonese and local slang by listening to my friends’ banter!” Outside the classroom, Thomas is taking part in the HKUST robot design competition. In fact, he and his teammates have just spent the previous night finishing building the robot that they would enter into this year’s competition. HKUST has more than 100 student societies and associations, allowing its students to pursue their unique interests, or discover new ones through establishing new groups or societies.

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Thomas admits that IIM is much more challenging compared to traditional undergraduate course work. Is he still happy with his decision to major in Bionics? “Yes, I am a risk taker!” he says, showcasing a fearless love of challenges that is, in fact, the perfect reflection of the HKUST spirit.