

The annual ACCA Hong Kong Business Competition encourages tertiary students to harness their business sense, analytical skills and teamwork to develop business plans for sound and sustainable social enterprises.



## Students get down to business

This year's ACCA Hong Kong Business Competition, a platform for tertiary students to hone their business skills and develop a business model to promote the idea of "doing well by doing good", focused on the theme "Building a Better Society, Stronger Business: Youth Can Do It". The ninth year hosting this competition, this year ACCA encouraged students to use their business acumen to develop sustainable yet feasible social enterprises that could both turn a profit and benefit the community. The annual competition was organised by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) Hong Kong in partnership with HKCSS-HSBC Social Enterprise Business Centre (SEBC).

This year's competition challenged each team to choose a group of disadvantaged individuals that would benefit from the

proposed enterprise. The beneficiaries could be underprivileged families, children, reformed ex-convicts, the disabled, the elderly, or an ethnic minority. Operating within a simulated professional setting, the entrants learned how input from accounting and business professionals contributes to the success of a project, and how it can help the underprivileged.

Jane Cheng, head of ACCA Hong Kong, says the competition motivates entrants to tackle social issues they are passionate about. The students learn how to use business-related and analytical skills, and practice working as a team. "We also want to heighten the students' awareness of social issues and form their perspective of win-win solutions... all teams are a step closer to realising their dreams of establishing their social enterprise," Cheng notes.

Each team was asked to formulate a business plan for a social enterprise backed by thorough market research and sound accounting input. Proposals had to be supported by a two-year funding plan with HK\$2 million initial fund. The competition was split into degree and sub-degree categories and open to full-time accounting and business students at local tertiary institutions. This year, 267 degree teams and 176 sub-degree teams involving nearly 1,700 students entered the competition.

At the finals, 14 teams in the degree and sub-degree competitions presented their plans to a panel of judges in front of an audience. Question-and-answer sessions allowed the finalists to provide more information about their proposals and interact with the judges. The judging panel consisted of

experienced finance professionals and representatives from a prominent family foundation and a social enterprise.

The teams were passionate about their presentations. Many used videos, role playing, and colourful props, and some chanted slogans to engage the audience. Innovative ideas included: a centre for single parents and their children; a mobile professional advice service centre staffed by legal and accounting undergraduates; a foot massage, manicure and pedicure centre for the elderly and disabled; and an online crowd-funding platform for social enterprises.

The competition is supported by Baker Tilly, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, EY, Hutchison Global Communications, KPMG, PwC, The Hung Hing Ying & Leung Hau Ling Charitable Foundation, and Classified Post.

## Winners showed creativity and business acumen

Winning team City University's business proposal, which focused on legal and accounting advisory services for the underprivileged, won plaudits from the judges at the ACCA Hong Kong Business Competition 2015 final (degree). Team members Yeung Sz-wing, Lam Kiu-chun, Kan Long-yin, and Tam Wing-ye are all year-two students studying for a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accountancy/ China Business.

Yeung said the team was inspired by the lack of access to legal counselling and other professional services for residents in public housing estates. "Services provided by the district councillor's offices are limited. Regular legal and taxation advisory services are too costly for people at the grassroots level," Yeung said.

The team conducted thorough research and interviewed their target customers, said Tam. "We have identified a strong demand for such services. Many low-income households seeking help from the government's legal department need to wait at least two months for a 30-minute consultation with a lawyer. The lack of services and the strong demand helped us make an emotional connection with the judges," Tam said.

Lam said the team's business aimed to engage with other enthusiastic youngsters to keep in line with the competition's theme "Youth Can Do It". Our plan is to enlist the help of third and final-year law and accounting students to provide voluntary support to those in need. They can help by using the professional knowledge learned at school," added Tam.

City University also took the "Best Team Spirit" award, as the judges felt all members were equally motivated to achieve their shared goal. Tam said it helped that the team all knew each other. "Throughout the collaboration, we accommodated each other, and tried our best to schedule long meetings to discuss the details. We also used Skype for discussions. We were united by our shared goal to perfect the proposal and presentation. Whenever we had any spare time, we would take the initiative to work on the revisions and develop more ideas. We brainstormed a lot. We burned the midnight oil and worked on the proposal at the library, and we established a rapport among ourselves. For instance, during the question and answer session, we knew exactly who would answer each question."

Year-four students of the Bachelor of Business Administration at the Hang Seng Management College (HSMC) won first runner-up.

This team also took home the "Most Creative" and "Best Proposal" awards. The team consisted of Chong Oi-shan, Lam Man-ting, Yu Hoi-lam and Leung Chin-wai. Team members were moved to tears when the results were announced.

HSMC's Lam said she and her family helped her grandmother, who suffered from diabetes, to clip her nails. That's when she realised that many other elderly and disabled individuals needed similar assistance. The team turned this observation of everyday life into an innovative business proposition.

Chong believed that the images and graphics in HSMC proposal demonstrated the team's creativity. "Our PowerPoint slides captured the judges' attention. Our presentation also featured a creative use of visual aids to reinforce our core message. We also referenced the social issues abroad; our research showed some hospitals in the US are willing to outsource manicure and pedicure services to social enterprises," Chong said.

Yu said the team learned a lot about teamwork and

collaboration: "A positive team spirit definitely helped motivate individual team members to put extra efforts in working towards the shared goal. I have also learned to be assertive to express my ideas."

The second runner-up team consisted of year-three students of Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting at Lingnan University. The team also won the "Best Budgeting" award. Team member Yuen Kam-oi said they applied their accounting knowledge to enhance the quality of their proposal: "We have a detailed cash flow and a comprehensive income statement, and we have included many costs."

Lingnan's Tai Lok said the team had revised their budget many times. "Professors looked at several versions of the budget and offered advice for improvement. To make our pricing realistic, we did extensive market research, and referenced the market rates charged by similar service providers."

The team's proposal made the emotional connection with the potential investors through its core objective. "We aim to help housewives of low-income households seek part-time job opportunities while still allowing them to look after their families. Our proposal meets their needs," Tai added. "For potential clients seeking flexible arrangement of part-time help, we provide instant matching of employers and job-seekers."

Cui Baoqi and Mi Lei completed the team, with Cui winning the "Best Presenter" award for Lingnan. Cui said that a presentation was a means of communication, so it was important to make sure the audience fully understood what was being said. "I used a relatively slow pace of delivery for the sake of clarity. That also left me with more time to think about what I was saying, and helped me minimise mistakes. My mother advised me to imagine I was telling a story to friends and relatives. I also recorded my presentation many times, to spot and correct mistakes," Cui said.



## Winners show collaborative skills

Picking the winner was a tough decision for the judges at the ACCA Hong Kong Business Competition 2015 (degree) final, as all entries were feasible and highly creative. The judges noted that the application of solid accounting and business knowledge to the proposals helped enhance the quality, as well as ensure the sustainable self-sufficiency of the proposed operations for the long term. But judges agreed that the winning team, from City University, had gone the extra mile by immersing their project, called "EASY" Empowered Advisory Services from Youth, in the community. The team had talked to their target customers and tailored the service to their needs.

"The City University team conducted a site visit, made a video of interviews with potential customers, took photos, got reference letters from professionals, and made a small model truck as a prop," said Jenny Hui, partner, audit, KPMG. The winners supported their research with sound accounting knowledge and a good understanding of their business model, said Teresa Tso, partner, assurance, EY. "They harnessed their accounting knowledge to present the whole picture. All the components of their proposal worked together well," said Tso.

"The winning team excelled in collaboration," said Yvette Yeh Fung of The Yeh Family Philanthropy. "Our foundation looked at each individual proposal's sustainability, and the added value they generated. When students develop their proposals, they should take into account the target market and potential market size. The winning team has done well in these aspects."

Edmund Yick, general manager of business sales at Hutchison Global Communications, noted that good ideas were crucial. "I assessed the proposals by considering the viability, the execution, and the analysis of competition and threats. The winning team has the best implementation plan."

Howard Ling, chief consultant of HKCSS-HSBC Social Enterprise Business Centre, said the judges looked at how individual team members interacted with one another at the question and answer session, as this demonstrated how well they collaborated. "The winning team has embraced the team spirit to the fullest. They supported one another in the question and answer session," Ling said.

Audit partner at Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, Natalie Chan, said the winning team's storytelling skills helped forge an emotional connection with the audience. "They began with the video interviews, followed by the details of their services, and then they presented the model truck. All aspects were presented smoothly and were well-executed."

City University also won the Best Team Spirit Award. Jane Cheng, head of ACCA Hong Kong, said their ability to collaborate set them apart. "They wore matching business attire, and at the question and answer session, they helped each other out. Each member's answers complemented those given by the others," Cheng noted.

Hang Seng Management College, the first runner-up, formulated a solid business proposal inspired by personal experience, Hui noted. "A team member had identified a need by noticing her grandmother needed help to clip her nails. This denotes an acute observation of the small things in our daily lives. They then applied their business knowledge to develop a business plan," said Hui. The first runner-up team's proposal also won the "Most Creative" and "Best Proposal".

"Their idea is creative, highly feasible, and practical. We appreciate their plan to help the elderly and the disabled. We think their proposal integrates creativity and business viability, and it is close to our daily life," Chan added.

Yick commented that Cui Baoqi, the Best Presenter, made a

good impression with her warm personality: "She kept a smile throughout the presentation and came across as friendly yet assertive." Tso echoed Yick's sentiment. "The Best Presenter makes you feel comfortable when you're listening to her," Tso said.

The judges praised the effort made by all the finalists. Mark Yeung, Director of assurance at PwC, said the youth-oriented business models succeeded in meeting the social needs of disadvantaged groups. "It is encouraging for us

to see that the entrants do care about the social issues in our society," said Yeung.

### Institute/ Team Name

Champion	City University of Hong Kong "EASY" Empowered Advisory Services from Youth
First Runner-up	Hang Seng Management College "Baau Zin Dap" – foot massage, manicure and pedicure for the elderly and disabled
Second Runner-up	Lingnan University "HABA" Home Assistants Hiring Agency
Best Proposal	Hang Seng Management College "Baau Zin Dap" – foot massage, manicure and pedicure for the elderly and disabled
Best Budgeting	Lingnan University "HABA"
Best Team Spirit	City University of Hong Kong "EASY"
Most Creative Team	Hang Seng Management College "Baau Zin Dap"
Best Presenter	Cui Baoqi, Lingnan University
My Favourite Team	Lingnan University "HABA"





The judges' consensus was that the quality of entries of the ACCA Hong Kong Business Competition (sub-degree) was impressive.

## 'Out of the box' proposal impresses judges

Judges at the ACCA Hong Kong Business Competition 2015 final (sub-degree) appreciated the winning team's 'out of the box' idea of using online crowd-funding to help local social enterprises access capital. The team, formed by students from HKU SPACE Community College, also won the "Most Creative" award. Team members were Apex Lau and Louis Lau, year-two, Higher Diploma in Business (Financial Services), and Brian Ng and Mark Ng, year-two, Associate of Business Administration (Finance).

HKU SPACE's Mark Ng noted that social enterprises have limited access to funds, which are mainly available from the government and angel investors. "This does not engage the community as a whole. We recognise the importance of involving the community in the development of social enterprises. So our plan is to introduce crowd-funding as the source of finance for them. This process helps raise public awareness of social enterprises, and the engagement of interested individuals will help the enterprises grow and develop products and services that meet the needs of society more precisely. This is also a marketing strategy, as enterprises will be able to gauge market responses to their products posted on our crowd-funding online portal and refine their ideas."

Apex Lau said the transparency of the business's operation gave it an edge. "Crowd-funding works in Hong Kong, as it is a human instinct that we want to know where our money goes. If the money comes from many people in the city, it will arouse the interest among people, and transform the process into a marketing campaign. Our platform specialises in funding social enterprises and forging the links among

them. This is the unique feature," Apex Lau said.

The creative idea of the winning team was supported by sound business planning. Putting together a professional-quality proposal was as enjoyable, as it was a great learning experience, said Louis Lau. "We made an enormous effort to refine our idea and conduct extensive online research to work out our budget. This is also the first time we have tried our hand at video-making."

The first runner-up team, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Shatin), identified a growing trend in Hong Kong: the up-cycling of discarded wooden furniture. The judges were impressed with the way the team combined the core idea of environmental protection with helping reformed ex-criminals reintegrate into the society. They also gave the team with the "Best Proposal" award. Their plan was comprehensive, including the recycling of discarded wooden furniture, the production of customised designs, and workshops for interested customers to create their own items. The proposal was called "Woodland", and the team consisted of Sophia Lau Lai-ying, Yip Ying-tung, and Tang Hoi-yin. All are year-two students of the Higher Diploma in Accountancy.

Yip said they had been inspired by reading reports about how wood could be up-cycled. "We thought that customised furniture made of parts from recycled furniture could be a viable business idea. The workshop idea came along when we found that we could rent a 7,000-square-foot unit in an industrial building in Kwai Ching with our budget," Yip explained.

Because of the spacious premises, team members believed they could add workshops focusing on wooden

handicraft items to the operation. Many young people are interested in 'do-it-yourself', according to Lau. "We plan to recruit reformed ex-criminals to help in this workshop. The interaction with others will help them reintegrate into the community," Lau said.

Tang said the team shared an enthusiasm for starting their business in the future. "We learned a lot about wood recycling and furniture production, and have really immersed ourselves in our roles as managers of the business."

The proposal of second runner-up focused on the development of a mobile application that gives real-time updates on seat vacancies on buses. The team members, students from the Hong Kong Community College, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, thought that a solid application of business knowledge and accounting techniques would make their proposal commercially viable. The team consisted of Ng Pei-ying, Mayu To, Tricia Hernandez, and Yu Po-lee. All are year-two students of Associate in Business (International Business).

Ng said that while the core concept of their case was inspired by real-life situations and personal experiences, the team conducted in-depth market research to work out the details. "Because we are

students of international business, the accounting part was tough to start with. We consulted with accountancy teachers and friends, and they guided us in the right direction, and helped us with developing and refining our budget," Ng said.

Mayu thought the competition was a great learning experience. "This is the first time we have developed a business proposal, prepared the budget, and looked at ways to enhance the appeal of our product to the potential customers. We have accomplished all these elements in a practical way. This competition enabled us to fully apply the skills and techniques we learned at school."

The team enjoyed the initial brainstorming part the most. "Our case is based on a real-life situation. We enjoyed the process of coming up with the solutions to our problem, and then applying the solutions to our business case, and integrating them with the mobile app," Mayu said.



Champion team's proposal for online crowd-funding platform targeting social enterprises won judges' plaudits.



The first runner-up team identified the growing popularity of recycled second-hand wooden furniture in Hong Kong.



Second runner-up team's plan for mobile app providing real-time updates of bus seat vacancy was inspired by their personal experience.

## Entries captivate judges and audience

The social enterprise proposals of the finalists at the ACCA Business Competition final (sub-degree) impressed judges and audience members alike. Delivering the overall judges' comments, Howard Ling, chief consultant of HKCSS-HSBC Social Enterprise Business Centre, said: "The ideas are creative and they kept the judges captivated... this competition is a serious one with serious money, because a potential investor was on the judging panel. It is not just the winning team's project that will get financial backing. Any proposals that are further improved with more input will have a chance, particularly those with a good balance between social purpose and business strategy."

Arthur Lee, chairman of ACCA Hong Kong, said the winning team, HKU SPACE Community College, stood out because of its unique proposition of an online crowd-funding business with social enterprises as the potential customers. "This is highly innovative. The team was also very assertive in their presentation and displayed excellent collaboration," Lee said. Added Edmund Yick, general manager of business sales at Hutchison Global Communications: "We are impressed by the wide scope of the winning team's business proposal to target the social enterprise sector." The proposal was entitled "CrowdSEED Crowd-funding for social enterprises".

Anntice Lai, director, technical and regulatory at Baker Tilly Hong Kong, thought the winning team's proposal was well executed. "Each part was well connected, from the executive summary to data collection, and everything was well-prepared. We also appreciated the way they incorporated a timeline into their proposal," added Lai.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong - School of Continuing

& Professional Studies won the "Best Budgeting" award. Winnie Ki, partner for assurance at EY, said a good budget should be full of comprehensive details. "Their proposal shows a high degree of clarity in its analysis of revenue, expenses and cash flow. The most important key financial information is featured in the report," Ki noted.

Ki pointed out that it was important that the entrants should do thorough market research to gain a full understanding of any potential competition in the marketplace. This is especially true for new business models, she said.

Lee also highlighted the importance of market research: "The entrants need to reference data from genuine sources. Because the judges treated their business proposals as real business cases, the proposals should contain details substantiated by genuine data to make them sound," he added. "Participants should conduct surveys to gauge the needs of potential target customers and develop their business prototypes accordingly."

Entrants needed to do in-depth market analysis to see if their proposed business ventures would be sustainable, judges said. Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Shatin), the winner of "Best Proposal" award, did well in this area, said Andy Chow, manager, human resources and development, at PwC. "They touched on the relatively easy access to second-hand wood furniture resources in Hong Kong. They also took into account more local people have begun to show interest in design-oriented second-hand wood furniture. The team has identified this growing trend which makes their business case commercially viable." The team's project was called "Woodland".

Hong Kong College of Technology won the "Best Team Spirit" award. Yick noted that all members of the team were eager to help

each other out during their presentation. "Unlike the other teams, no single team member dominated the presentation," he said.

Relying too heavily on volunteers as a human resource was a common mistake. "They should think carefully whether volunteers can completely replace regular full-time staff in a sustainable operation. Some volunteers may not want to continue

helping if they realise the business is profit-making," Lai said.

Yick said the judges enjoyed all the presentations. However, only a few teams included executive summaries in their proposals. "The executive summary should be the conclusion of the proposal so that the decision-makers can quickly assess it," said Yick.

### Institute/ Team Name

Champion	HKU SPACE Community College "CrowdSEED" - Crowd-funding for social enterprises
First Runner-up	Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Shatin) "Woodland" - second-hand wood furniture recycling
Second Runner-up	Hong Kong Community College, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University "NextBus" - Mobile App for bus seat vacancy
Best Proposal	Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Shatin) "Woodland"
Best Budgeting	The Chinese University of Hong Kong - School of Continuing & Professional Studies "Evergreen Cafe" - coffee bean planting
Best Team Spirit	Hong Kong College of Technology "F.L.Y." - Centre for Single Parents and their Kids
Most Creative Team	HKU SPACE Community College "CrowdSEED"
Best Presenter	Joshua Wong, City University of Hong Kong, Community College "RebornY" - hair salon for youth
My Favourite Team	City University of Hong Kong, Community College "VolunHelp" - Smartphone App for volunteers