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Thanks to the Innovation and Technology Commission, The Hongkong Bank Foundation and The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups who have worked closely together to establish the Innovation and Technology Scholarship Award Scheme, the whole Scheme has changed my life. I was given ample opportunities, which seemed to be unreachable to me if I was not given the chance to join the Scheme, to widen my intellectual horizon and to challenge myself in order to equip myself for facing challenges in the future.



UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

Overseas Attachment Programme

I was admitted by the School of Electronics and Computer Science (ECS), University of Southampton, as a visiting student of BSc in Computer Science for a semester.

The University of Southampton is a British public university located in the city of Southampton, United Kingdom. It was found in 1952. However, it has its origin as the Hartley Institution which was formed in 1862. Therefore, it has around 150 years of history. The University of Southampton places a strong emphasis on research. It conducts researches in most academic disciplines. According to London Times Online 2008, the university had one of the highest proportions of income derived from research activities in Britain and it was home to quite a number of research centres. Numerous researches conducted by the university were outstanding. For example, Fibre laser, widely applied in telecommunications, manufacturing, medicine and science, pioneered in the Optoelectronics Research Centre of the university in the 1980s. Not only did the university work studiously on its own researches, but it also laid much emphasis on the collaboration between different institutions for scientific researches. The School of Electronics and Computer Science has created the first archiving software, Prints, to publish its research freely available on the internet. This system is used throughout the university as institutional repositories and the platform to share its scientific journals with other institutions.



Outside the Hartley Library in the Highfield Campus

As for the city, Southampton is on the south coast of England. Its sheltered location ensures it is amongst the warmer, sunnier cities in the UK.

Southampton is well-known for its association with one of the deadliest peacetime maritime disaster in history: RMS Titanic, a passenger line which sank on 15 April 1912 due to its crash on an iceberg. A Titanic Memorial Museum was anticipated to open this year, exactly the 100th anniversary of the tragedy. Southampton is also home to "The Saints", Southampton Football Club, which was playing in the Football League Championship at St Mary's Stadium. Generally speaking, Southampton is a lovely city and it is a good place to live because of its climate and the relatively low cost of living, when compared to other cities in the United Kingdom.

I had set several objectives, for both academic and personal growth, before I embarked on my attachment programme, as I thought these objectives could serve as measurements for me to reflect from time to time, to evaluate whether I had made the most out of the attachment opportunities. More importantly, setting up learning

objectives enabled me to know where I intended to go and increased the chance for me to achieve them.

Being a student in Hong Kong for more than 18 years, I got used to the learning culture in Hong Kong and I had a thorough understanding on how the education system worked in Hong Kong. Studying abroad meant you were studying in an environment with a significantly different academic setting. I wished I could adapt to the new academic setting in a short period of time and completed all the relevant course work and exams with outstanding performance.

This was also a very good opportunity to make friends with students in my host institution and other exchange students in order to develop an understanding of how students in other countries differed from those in Hong Kong and at the same time, to promote Hong Kong. In addition, this could also increase my ability to interact constructively with people of different cultures and this would be a great time to polish my spoken English.

Being able to live in the UK had long been my dream. I would like to capitalise on the Attachment Programme in order to explore more about the politics, historical, cultural and social issues in this country. It was different from knowing them by reading newspapers because I could experience them in person.

I have never tried to be away from home for more than 20 days. In other words, I have been staying in my "comfort zone" most of the time. It is time I learnt to be more independent and mature and to challenge myself.

The World Wide Web is the largest information construct in history. It is indeed a vitally important information hub on the planet with billions of people using it every single day for all kinds of purposes. The internet has also transformed our society, especially the way that we communicate with each other. It is really interesting and meaningful to understand what the internet is, what processes have driven its growth, how the internet works as a socio-technical system and how knowledge is created from interlinked data available through online services. Web Science is the study of all these. Web Science is indeed a new interdisciplinary field introduced by ECS of University of Southampton.

The University of Southampton is the pioneer in Web Science and the subject is led by a group of well-known scholars such as Sir Timothy John "Tim" Berners-Lee (inventor of the World Wide Web), Dame Wendy Hall (one of the founders of the Microcosm hypermedia system which has already existed before the World Wide Web) and Nigel Richard Shadbolt.

I was so excited when I knew that ECS was going to offer me a place in the university as a visiting student so I had already decided to take some Web Science courses during my stay and look for opportunities to interact with leaders of the World Wide Web.

There were quite a number of difficulties that I encountered during the preparation process. For instance, it was hard to find short-term accommodation since most of the landlords were not willing to go for a contract for less than six months and the school was not able to offer on-campus accommodation for exchange or visiting students who were just studying for a semester. My family and I were worried about this. Luckily, with the help of Dr. William Kwok-Wai Cheung

from Hong Kong Baptist University, I was accepted by a host family in Southampton.

Moreover, I was in touch with the senior tutor, Mr. Eric Cooke from the School of Electronics and Computer Science, to deal with all arrangements regarding the Attachment Programme. I was impressed by his strong passion in assisting others via our email contacts. He gave me a lot of detailed information on how the university system works in the UK and the guidelines on choosing the courses in the School of Electronics and Computer Science throughout the preparation period, as I was so puzzled about all these at the time and I was busy preparing for my final exams in Hong Kong at that time.



Mr. Eric Cooke and I

He was a very caring person as well. He kept on giving me a lot of advice and tips when I arrived at Southampton. He also treated me coffee for several times and asked whether I was fine in the university to make sure that everything went on smoothly. We had a lot to chat, ranging from courses in the school to philosophy and religion. We became very good friends and I would also like to take this opportunity to thank him for his support and guidance in the past few months.

The university and the city worked closely with quite a lot of cities and countries on exchanging knowledge and ideas as well as academic research. Hong Kong could also collaborate with more parties in terms of innovation and technology development. Collaborating with more parties could enhance the exchange and impartation of knowledge and experience, which were the keys to creating a leading-edge infrastructure for innovation and technology development.

All in all, the Overseas Attachment Programme was a very nice experience and it was a remarkable and memorable milestone in my life. I gained more understanding about Web Science and I also cultivated an interest in it throughout my study in Southampton. It gave me an insight in this brand new discipline as well as some problems that the internet was currently facing. Some of those problems were avoidable or could be alleviated via educating internet users. Therefore, I hope I can do something about it and try to promote those messages via social service projects. I am pretty sure that if I am going to further my studies, Web Science is definitely one of my choices.

The attachment programme allowed me to establish a global network of friends. We worked together in projects, shared our views

on technologies and introduced the cultures of our own countries. They all became good friends of mine and this kind of global network enabled me to have the opportunity to cooperate with them in future to work on global information technology projects. We could utilise what we had learnt and the ideas in our minds might come up again, inspire strategies or new inventions to make the world a better place. My cross-cultural communication skills had greatly improved while I was trying to make friends and hang out with my lovely friends. I had to cope with the cultural differences but I learnt how to appreciate these differences we had among us, and I was sure that this was beneficial to my future career as well. The most unforgettable experience for me was that we had to work on an Information Security course work together. We were given a fake bank website which was full of vulnerabilities prone to hacking. We stayed at the "Zelger Lab" from early mornings until evenings for almost 2 weeks and we were so excited when we discovered more and more vulnerabilities. We had difficulty in discovering the last vulnerability and we spent a lot of time on that. We came up with a method suddenly and we divided ourselves into two small groups to test it. I could still remember the moment when we got the final vulnerability, we were so happy that we hugged each other.



My lovely group mates for the security project

University of Southampton was such a lovely university. I had never imagined that I could find a cinema in campus! You could find a cinema in University of Southampton!

According to my observation, students from western countries tended to be more active during lectures and tutorials when compared to Asian students. I was quite shy and passive initially. However, I decided to change this kind of learning attitude and I found out that adopting a proactive approach in learning always helped a lot.

I faced quite a number of personal challenges throughout the Attachment Programme. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my host family, Mr. Bennee Cullado and his family members for their help and courage during my stay. "The most important thing is that you have gained some sort of experience and be better equipped for handling other challenges in the future," Mr. Cullado shared with me when I was facing one of my challenges.

I understood more about myself and the problem-solving skills that I developed were definitely useful for my future life.



Being an assistant in a science workshop

Local Internship Programme

Speaking of my local internship experience, I worked in the Research and Development (Phones Development) Department of VTech Holdings Limited from 7 to 19 June 2011. Although it was just a very short internship, it was fruitful. My manager arranged a series of learning activities for me instead of assigning me a lot of tasks since he knew that I would be working in VTech for less than 10 days. It was my first internship and everything was very new to me. My manager explained the whole product life cycle of a phone and how different departments in VTech worked together to produce a phone. These really helped someone like me who was totally new to the IT industry, as I had no idea on how the real industry worked. I was also given the chance to play around with some hotel phones and cordless phones. It was amazing to use some computer programmes to find out what happened exactly when we were trying to make a voiceover IP (VoIP) call, make a call within the hotel, conduct conference calls, and so on. Every time when I encountered something that I did not know, I would try my best to sort that out on my own first. If I could not really understand it, I would turn to my manager and he was willing to spend a large amount of time to explain the principles to me. These had enhanced my knowledge of telecommunications. Having an internship in a research and development institute enabled me to understand how researches and development were done within a company and the importance of creativity in this industry in order to differentiate your products from others.

Apart from learning more about telecommunications, my manager also shared his views on the future trends of this industry, his personal experiences and what I should pay attention to when I attended job interviews in future.

In conclusion, it was a very practical and useful internship.

Mentorship Programme

My mentor is Professor Tony F Chan, JP, Vice-Chancellor of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Professor Chan had encouraged me to open my eyes to all subjects, both within and outside Computer Science, before I embarked on my exchange journey since there were always exciting new intellectual developments which were beyond my expectations.

I learnt to expose myself to different areas when I had to face a completely new environment. Be receptive to new insights and ideas so that I could have a fruitful experience.

To sum up, the Scheme is a comprehensive Scheme in the way that it allows awardees to gain academic, professional, career and life skills, which are advantages for personal empowerment. I earnestly hope that the Scheme can keep going to benefit more outstanding youths.