“How I end up studying PhD at CUHK”

Chen Jianwei, a Mainland master graduate from MSc MAE 2013 sharing his PhD journey at CUHK.

1. When did you decide to pursue your master studies?
During the third year of my undergraduate studies, I started to consider my future: work or continue studying? After seeking advice from different people such as professors, seniors, classmates and families, I decided to explore my research interest in mechanical automation engineering.

2. How did you make your choice?
After I received my postgraduate recommendation from Xi’an Jiaotong University, I applied for graduate programs offered in Hong Kong. Eventually, I received offers from various universities, such as HKU, CUHK, HKUST, and HKPU.

I decided to study in Hong Kong because Hong Kong is a vibrant international city with high fliers. It is also close to my hometown, which offers more opportunities and possibilities after my graduation.

Among my offers from universities in Hong Kong, I selected the MSc program in MAE at CUHK. The Chinese University of Hong Kong is renowned for its historic background and good world ranking. The professors here are very knowledgeable with excellent connections. They have conducted much leading and innovative research and are known to provide extensive support to their students.

3. When did you make up your mind for the PhD studies?
I was inspired by Prof. Chen Shih-Chi, my professor at my MAE studies. Prof. Chen is now my current supervisor, who has given me a lot of valuable guidance and inspired me tremendously in Nanotechnology. He helped me discover my passion for scientific research. CUHK also provides me with the laboratory, facilities and funding to conduct my research and experiments.
"The MSc Program in Mechanical and Automation Engineering is a flexible program which helps ambitious students work in Hong Kong or further pursue their PhD studies."

Prof. Charlie Changling Wang, Associate Professor and Director of the MSc Programme in Mechanical and Automation Engineering

4. How did you prepare yourself to get admitted to PhD?
First, I worked hard on all the courses and projects, which are essential attributes for my future study and research.

Next, I have to find out my specific research interest. Each professor has his or her own specialized fields, such as robotics, smart materials and control. Interested in nanotechnology, I read lots of background materials and papers in this area before I approached Prof. Chen to ask for opportunities to participate in his research.

Thirdly, I made good use of the database, the resources at the library and workshops offered by CUHK to continually enrich my knowledge of the cutting-edge technology and improve my research skills.

Last but not the least, I always attend seminars presented by professors all over the world with diverse backgrounds, which broadens my international horizons and inspired my research ideas.

4. Why choose Nanotechnology?
My graduate design for my undergraduate program at Xi’an Jiaotong University is about Nano-imprint technology. The project aroused my interest in Nanotechnology research, which is a leading trend with vast possibilities and applications in nano physics, materials, manufacturing, etc.

5. As a Mainland student studying in Hong Kong, what are some difficulties you faced?
First, I have to adapt to the international environment and culture in CUHK. All the courses are taught in English here instead of Chinese on the Mainland. It is quite a challenge to communicate with others and express myself in English. After taking workshops and lots of practices, I became confident to express myself in English.
Secondly, I need to learn to communicate and cooperate with people from all over the world. Unlike on the Mainland where students do not have many opportunities to meet people with diverse backgrounds, I have abundant chances to interact and exchange ideas with people from all over the world in Hong Kong.

5. Any advice for students who want to study MSc MAE?
MSc MAE is a distinctive program which equips you with valuable knowledge and cutting edge technology in mechanical automation engineering. One not only has ample opportunities to learn the research theories, applications but also meets renowned researchers in each specialized area. Always remember to participate actively in all the classes and projects. Enrolling in MSc MAE brings tremendous opportunities to both your studies and your whole-person development. Prepare yourself well ahead before the opportunities knock the door!