

Education



Risky business

Local universities are beefing up financial programs, writes Joyce Kam

WHILE MAJOR FINANCIAL institutions in the world are laying off staff, local universities are launching new business programs to pump new blood into the industry. The Chinese University of Hong Kong has just announced a double major program in quantitative finance and risk management science to produce more sophisticated financial practitioners.

"We believe the two subjects will work in greater synergy in a double major program, for students can gain a better understanding in both areas, which complement each other," said professor Chan Ngai-hang, chairman of the department of statistics and the person who launched the program.

The program aims to train risk-management experts especially for the finance industry. "The current subprime mortgage crisis just highlights the importance of proper training and expertise in both area," he said. "We have foreseen the needs."

As it will be a demanding program, Chan expects the students who are accepted to be hard-working and talented. New courses under the program include operation risks.

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology is also launching a new program called risk management and business intelligence. "We hope students can analyze the existing client data in a company, utilize and turn them into knowledge and resources to develop suitable products in a statistical way," said associate professor Mike So Kapui, director of the program.

"Risk management is no longer based on experi-



ences, it needs statistics to support it, which is similar to business intelligence. The two are compatible and indispensable," he said. "We will also want students to pass the international risk-management exams in their final year."

The program is unique to HKUST, as well as its company-sponsored capstone projects. "Students are required to participate in a research project led by a senior manager in the company for at least two semesters," So said.

"These projects will allow students to apply

classroom knowledge in real-world situations, and widen their network."

But the program is not designed specifically for the financial industry, so the skills can be applied to the logistics or medical industries as well.

For Hong Kong University, three new programs have been lined up: quantitative finance, wealth management, and business design and innovation. "Currently, we have no plans to launch a major in risk management as our quantitative finance program already has well-rounded courses on the mat-

ter, like credit risk management and market risk management," said assistant professor Clement Wong of the business and economics faculty.

The program emphasizes practical aspects such as legal, compliance and operation issues. "We have also integrated the current financial crisis as a case study in our curriculum," he said.

The wealth management program is another necessity. "In my opinion, the credit crisis will lead to stricter regulations, which demand real professionals do wealth management for clients," he said. "That person will be in charge of the whole portfolio of his client, including taxation, investment, insurance and retirement funds.

"Given that China and Hong Kong comprise 40 percent of the millionaires in Asia, I think they will be highly competitive."

Seeing that popular websites such as YouTube and Facebook were created by youngsters, HKU's business design and innovation program hopes to cultivate talent in that aspect. "Apart from courses like creativity and business innovation and business transformation to nurture creativity and innovative ideas, students have to take courses in music, fine arts, architecture and other areas," said associate dean for admissions Tso Ping-shu.

"Three specific courses of entrepreneurship, venture capital and project management will be useful to students if they wish to set up their own businesses later in their careers."

All courses will be admitting their first batch of students in September.

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