



Tech centre-stage at workshops

An interesting line-up of workshops on diverse topics featuring experienced specialists was arranged by HKICPA aiming to enrich aspiring accountants' knowledge of specialisations.

At the workshop on forensic accounting, Irene Siu said she focused on fraud investigation and also worked as expert witness and on computer forensics. "Another critical part of my work is prevention," added Siu, who is the executive director, fraud investigation and dispute services at Ernst & Young Advisory Services. "Many multinational corporations need to comply with regulations in different jurisdictions. Our work cycle includes assessment of companies' current systems and developing corrective measures if problems arise and help with implementation."

Managing director of BDO, Johnson Kong, said that the skills for forensic accounting covered auditing, accounting legal knowledge and investigation. "The specialists need to be analytical as they process and analyse huge amount of data to compile reports. They should be inquisitive and detail-oriented."

Concluding the discussion, managing director of HLB Hodgson Impey Cheng, Raymond Cheng, believed time management was among the essential skills because forensic accountants always need to think and act fast. He encouraged students to participate in the activities organised by HKICPA's forensic

interest group to learn more about the specialisation.

Speakers at the workshop on digitalisation in accounting used video clips to underscore the impact of rapid technological developments on the profession. Corporate vice-president and group financial controller of Tencent Holdings, Matthew Cheng, said new technological applications, such as artificial intelligence and big data, help spare workforces repetitive manual tasks and concentrate more on analytical and managerial focus. "Digitalised systems would help reduce mistakes, enhance the efficiency in service cycle and identify risks...technologies let more finance professionals focus on higher value-added work, such as analytics."

Echoing Cheng's view was Benson Ng, partner at Ernst & Young Advisory Services. "A rising number of companies have adopted advanced technologies in their operations. For instance, AI for forensic accounting helps detect forged invoices and companies use big data for auditing."

Workshop moderator Eric Tong, vice president of HKICPA and partner, audit & assurance, Deloitte China, encouraged the aspiring accountants to embrace technologies. "AI will not replace accountants and auditors. Adoption of technologies will help us focus more on getting insights, ask the correct and pertinent questions, work on more insightful analysis of businesses and formulate better solutions."