

## CONSTRUCTION &amp; PROPERTY SUPPLEMENT

## Fellowship programme gives aspiring students an easy entry

Leading construction company invests hundreds of thousands of dollars every year in creating pre-employment experiences for budding professionals

by Christy Liu

**T**he Hong Kong government's recent decision to invest considerably in local infrastructure projects has given the construction industry an incredible lift. While such increased momentum naturally creates career opportunities, it poses immense challenges for construction employers seeking quality people.

In view of this, Hong Kong's leading construction company, Gammon Construction Limited has been making every effort to attract quality fresh graduates and talented young people. In 2002, the company launched a one-year "Gammon University fellowship programme" in a move to offer career enhancement opportunities to Hong Kong's undergraduates.

Shirley Ng, group head of learning and development, Gammon Construction Limited says, "Every year, the programme attracts a wealth of quality students who look to developing a solid career. This year alone, we successfully recruited 29 people from universities in both

Hong Kong and Macau."

In a bid to prepare young aspirants for a bright future, the Gammon University fellowship programme promotes an array of experiences including personal mentoring, summer training, site visits and company activities. High performers are also prioritised for permanent positions with Gammon upon completion of the programme. Ms Ng stresses, "We hope that participants will join Gammon Construction after graduation."

The programme is offered on a part-time basis. The majority of activities ensure participants work regularly with construction professionals, providing students with first-hand experience of real life projects and an introduction to the intricacies involved in typical professional settings.

### Buddying up

Every student undertaking the fellowship programme is paired with a personal mentor to bounce technical or career ideas off. Participants are also invited to meet senior managers to discuss career options in the construction industry at large. In the summer, a structured

training programme is also arranged.

This again involves students and mentors liaising on major sites or in offices in Hong Kong, Macau or Shenzhen.

Visits to project sites in Hong Kong and Macau also feature to facilitate assignment completion, the overall goal being to test both understanding and familiarisation of individual sites. Additionally, students are invited to participate in the Gammon innovative competition and external competitions; take part in exhibitions, conferences, seminars and special events.

"Business growth in recent years has brought opportunities to the sector, but it has also led to a severe shortage of quality people. Our company believes that sustainable development starts with investment in quality people. To this end, we seek high calibre candidates before they graduate from university," Ms Ng notes.

She elaborates on the HK\$50,000-a-person fellowship programme: "To ensure the quality of the programme's outcome, we select only the cream of the crop. To do this, we have in place rigorous selection criteria. When we conducted



Shirley Ng, group head, learning and development  
Gammon Construction Limited  
Photo: Wallace Chan

interviews to recruit fellows for this year's programme, we assessed candidates according to both their academic achievement and personality attributes. We also look for commitment, self-motivation, energy and performance."

### Graduate search

Aside from the fellowship programme, the company is now recruiting fresh graduates to join its graduate trainee programme which comprises a one-month induction course and a three-year training schedule. "At present, we have already recruited about 40 graduates to join the programme. However, we are still looking for more," Ms Ng adds.

Besides providing young talent with comprehensive training options, the company is also committed to career development and growth opportunities for existing staff

who are offered a clear career development path with Gammon Construction. For example, an assistant engineer can climb the ladder to engineer or project engineer and secure subsequent promotion to supervisory and managerial levels.

Ms Ng says, "Transparent career options are a powerful retention strategy. People are our most important asset, so staff at all levels must be encouraged to visualise their career potential from the very beginning."

Ms Ng suggests fresh graduates consider career options and aspirations with great care. "If you are ready to make a professional commitment, you must demonstrate your ability to secure a successful position, but also consider your long-term career perspective," she concludes. **CT**

**Gammon**  
Practical excellence

- Comprehensive fellowship programme prepares youngsters for professional life
- On-site training offers solid work experience
- Through train for high performing undergraduates looking for full-time employment
- Existing staff encouraged to map out careers