

**CUHK Convocation Study Improvement Awards 2022/23**  
**香港中文大學校友評議會學業進步獎 2022/23**

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<b>Major</b> 主修	Chemistry

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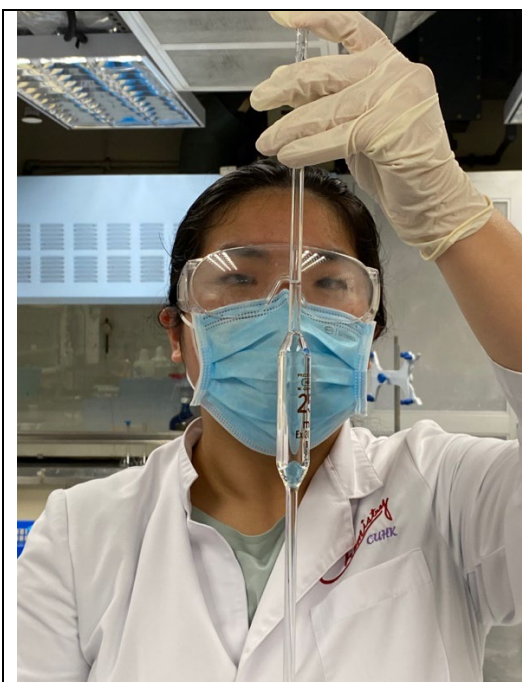
When I asked my teachers for letters of recommendation so that I could apply to universities, one of them asked me to tell her why I wanted to go to university. There are a lot of reasons to do so, of course. One often cited one is the correlation between getting a degree and higher wages. Another is that many opportunities become available after graduating from a university. My first thoughts upon seeing the question, however, were that it was a good way to learn independence and that I loved learning, and both reasons still hold true, even though I'd forgotten the latter for a while.

Learning during COVID was difficult for many reasons. It was a very isolating experience. I thought I was completely alone. Some of the concepts that I hadn't fully grasped came back to haunt me, but I was too scared to ask for help. I thought that I should be able to stand alone, but that wasn't true. I had to relearn that no one here wanted me to fail and to reach out to people.

I am grateful to my department for being so accommodating. They planned extra tutorials for me, where I was encouraged to ask for further explanation on the topics I didn't fully understand. Once I got that first feeling in a long while of everything clicking into place, of knowing that I knew how all the symbols and variables worked together, a spark of wanting to learn lit up and started burning. I started asking the teaching assistants to explain assignment questions that I'd gotten wrong or partially wrong. I started asking the professors for feedback and further explanation for exams and projects. I studied more, took better notes (it generally helps to note which slide you're taking notes for), and took better care of my health. I remembered to breathe and slow down when things seemed like they would get overwhelming. I remembered that university isn't meant to be a solo act, that many top universities pride themselves on being places where people from multiple backgrounds are able to meet, collaborate, and inspire each other.

In short, there are two things to remember. One, you are not alone. Two, keep sight of your reasons for coming to university, even if they change. The curriculum is structured so that the things you learned in previous semesters are important foundations for the things you will learn. Not knowing can be scary, or embarrassing, or any other negative feeling, but you are in charge of your life now. There are textbooks to consult, teaching assistants to ask, or professors to speak to. Breathe in, and if nothing else, go out and get your money's worth.

Finally, I am very thankful to CUHK Convocation for giving me this opportunity and for choosing me. With the lessened financial burden, I hope to dedicate more time and focus into my studies and to attend more university events, especially the ones with a nonrefundable fee, where I can learn skills for job-hunting and more about other cultures, as well as allowing me to connect with new people. It is a tremendous gift, and thank you again for putting your faith in me.



I am dressed in lab-appropriate attire and using a volumetric pipette to measure out 25.00 milliliters of solution.



The students hold up their most polished pieces alongside the instructor and teaching assistants at the end of a Chinese Characters and Calligraphy Workshop. I am the third student from the right in the back row, and I am pleased with the result, especially with the fourth character.