

EVENTS WATCH

Surveying in the spotlight

The HKIS booth at the 27th HKTDC Education & Careers Expo served to highlight the prospects of young surveyors, writes **Prudence Lui**

Joining more than 860 organisations from 22 countries, the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (HKIS) took part in the 27th Hong Kong Trade Development Council Education & Careers Expo, a premium annual event that draws tens of thousands of students and jobseekers every year.

HKIS president Thomas Ho hailed the event as a golden opportunity to give a clearer picture of what surveyors do. "The general public tends to lack a clear understanding of our role, and some may even be confused about our contribution to Hong Kong's progress," he said. "It was therefore encouraging to see so many people being drawn to our booth to learn more about the industry."

Ho said that he believes the future is bright for the profession not just because of the many ways to qualify – such as via university or IVE courses – but because of its link to construction.

"The maturity of Hong Kong's development is a well-discussed point because many areas have already been developed, but we must take into account the fact that many buildings were constructed 30 to 50 years ago or more. They need to be rebuilt or repaired, and such works need to be conducted by surveyors. When you talk about planning and housing, we have surveyors who specialise in construction, land and valuation."

"Also, the Belt and Road initiatives will provide good opportunities for surveyors working in and with these countries. Furthermore, the establishment of the Property Management Services Authority under the Property Management Services Ordinance will drive demand for surveyors as part of the new-style property facility management."

Ho gave a 30-minute talk at the expo on careers in the surveying profession, going back to Hong Kong's

earliest days in 1843. He traced the many milestones the profession has achieved, such as developing training for local students at the then Hong Kong Technical College back in the 1960s, as well as the birth of the HKIS in 1984. He also highlighted surveyors' scope of work, the background of the HKIS and the qualifications required for surveyors, as well as the multitude of career prospects.

Chris Mook, chairman of the Young Surveyors Group (YSG), said that the idea behind this year's expo booth was to introduce the profession in a special way and deepen understanding of the institute's six divisions. To do this, the team introduced more interactive elements.

"In the past we outlined and presented details on display boards, but this time we gave things a twist by introducing mini-games to promote more interaction," Mook said. "Three games were specially designed to de-



Students helpers manning the HKIS booth used interactive games to educate visitors on various aspects of surveying.

note the daily work of surveyors involving four groups of professional practices: building surveying, quantity surveying, general practice, and planning and development."

During the expo's four days, the HKIS booth was managed by a team of 40 volunteers, comprising 20 university students and 20 HKIS members. There were three shifts per day of between four and six hours, the main task being to answer queries from the public.

"Frequent questions included the way to attain qualifications, what overseas qualifications were recognised, job and career prospects, and salary levels," Mook said. "The prospects for the profession are certainly bright given future developments like the new CBD on Lantau and civil works in China springing from Belt and Road initiatives."

Ho's advice for students was to take that initiative to learn about the

profession as early as possible. "They can do this, for example, by visiting future career expos or signing up for activities designed along our branding campaign, such as map-making competitions in secondary schools," he said. "Indeed, the HKIS organises regular career talks in schools covering different surveying categories. Last November, we worked for the first time with the Education Bureau on the 'Business-School Partnership Programme's Work Experience Movement'. So far, around 18 companies have got involved and arranged for students to work with them for two or three days."

Tansy Cheung, a Year 1 student of the Department of Surveying at the University of Hong Kong, lent a helping hand at the booth. "I wanted to know more about the industry and the people involved. There was also the opportunity to learn things that aren't on our university syllabus, such as

communication skills. Also, my university course hasn't covered all aspects of land surveying, so I was able to pick up some basic information from the leaflets."

One of the visitors to the booth, a Year 4 student from a Hong Kong university, admitted he had only a narrow understanding on surveying and thought it was only related to big construction projects like the West Kowloon Cultural District. Afterwards, however, he had a much better idea of what the profession involved.

"I gained a better understanding after playing one of the games and one of the helpers explained to me lesser-known perspectives like valuation," he explained. "I also learned that the path to become a qualified surveyor is not easy due to the high entry level. For instance, in the first two years a graduate needs to build up a certain number of service hours within their respective field."



HKIS General Council members backed up members of the Young Surveyors Group and student helpers in running the booth.