

## Message from AIS Graduate Representative (Class of 2020)

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We made it.....under exceptional circumstances. I believe every one of us has been doing the best to keep things from falling apart, including having a virtual graduation. Thank you to our parents, to our university, and to our faculty members for making it possible. And, we thank you all for your support throughout our entire educational journey at the City University of Hong Kong (CityU).

Although we might not be throwing our hats in the air, we are still graduating. Our hard work has not gone unnoticed. For others, that piece of paper might not mean so much, but to us it represents years of dedication, determination, and commitment.

It is not easy to summarise my and your last four years in a few lines. We might be graduating from the same university, but we all have different stories to tell.

What we have in common is that we all know who we are, but we do not know what we may become. I was often among the bottom of my class when I was young. Trying to obtain decent grades was like a castle in the sky; When I was eleven, I had an accident on a school sport day. I focused on my school work for the three months it took my arm to heal. That year, I was recognised for being the “Most Improved Student”. Years later, I was injured again, eight months before the public exam. I was hospitalised for a while. I did not enter the university that year – the bachelor degree offered by the Department of Asian and International Studies (AIS) was my first choice on the JUPAS application. Soon after I graduated from secondary school, I joined a business competition, and I became a young entrepreneur. I received a total of HK\$280,000 for investment in my early 20s. My startup lasted for two years, and I was once again feeling lost. I gathered myself and backpacked for a few months traveling to China, New Zealand, and Canada. I was inspired and encouraged by the travelers I met during the trip therefore I decided to return to university. For years, I wondered if I would study again. Today I am graduating from AIS. We never know what we can achieve until we set our mind to it. We are going to try something, and we might fail. What defines us is not our failure, but the choices we make.

We are graduating into a world that faces more profound challenges than any generation in decades. Still, I have no doubt that we can become change-makers. We are the generation that is witnessing and experiencing the side effects of the globalised world. The challenges we encounter today are beyond a virus. The pandemic just brought into focus problems that have been around for a very long time. The most severe crises are forcing us to address all of the global issues. Today, we aren't just trying to change the world to make it a better place. We are trying to shape our time's challenges. In our parents' time, fast food and chain restaurants were considered cool dining experiences. Today, we have Veganism. We read nutrition labels

because we try to avoid genetically modified foods. We are concerned about where and how the products are made because we understand the importance of responsible consumption. We have volunteered in developing countries because we value equal opportunity and try our best to bring benefit to the poor. We preserve the environment because we know there is only one planet and it can't be continually exhausted. We participate in global events because we believe such exposure will enrich our lives, and gaining knowledge is not limited to the classroom.

No words can describe our gratitude to professors from AIS who not only taught us knowledge from books but also showed us how to be critical thinkers as well as practical people. We have been exposed to more knowledge and perspectives than any other generation. We are technologically savvy, diplomatic, entrepreneurial, environmentally conscious and open-minded. Knowledge is power, and "with great power comes great responsibility". We are well-equipped to step up to make a difference and utilise our talents to tackle poverty, inequality, global health issues, refugee displacement, discrimination, climate change and many other world challenges.

No one would have thought that globalised work from home and virtual activities would become so common place until very recent times. That being said, nothing is impossible in our time, and right now, it is time for us to shape the world.

Class of 2020, please take a moment to celebrate and honour your achievements and successes. We have a great future ahead of us.

