

**Interview Report about Study and Career advice from
Melbourne University Alumni**

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Executive summary

This is an interview report about study and career advice from Melbourne university alumni. The report aims to summarize valuable and exercisable recommendations from these alumni, so that future students can learn from the past and make plan reasonably for their university lives. The interviewees are from financial, education and public and national relation faculties. Among them, Suzie and Sharon are Chinese alumni who are going to graduate from the university of Melbourne in late 2019 and 2020 respectively. The other interviewee, Su, from New Zealand, have been working in Japan for two years after obtaining his bachelor's degree, then he has been Harvard University for graduate study before transferring to Melbourne university. He will graduate at the end of 2019 in The University of Melbourne.

We believe that people from different majors and ages have different feelings and experiences when they review their own life. Thus, we interviewed them several questions on how to cope with study and life, how to find a job, how to deal with difficulties in the workplace, etc. By comparing and recording similarities and differences in their experiences, the report made a summary of their recommendations, hoping that this multi-angle interview report on studying and working trajectories of Melbourne university alumni can help future students.

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1. Introduction

For many people, the period before admission and near graduation are often full of confusion and anxiety. For new students and graduates, this is the time when many important decisions will be made, such as, how to plan study schedule properly; how to manage University study and life; which job can be beneficial for future; what kinds of skill should be prepared in student time for future career; how to find a decent job, etc. Fear of unknown university life and anxiety of entering the workplace are normal, which also makes the advice of predecessors especially important. The report collected three interviewees' advice and recommendations, from financial, education and international relations faculty respectively. Among the three alumni, one is from New Zealand and the other two are from China. The former is 30 years old and the latter two are around 23. Around these differences, our group conducted interviews about life, study and career. We hope that different national cultures, age experiences and professional fields can give future students multi-angle and multi-dimensional recommendations.

2. Findings

The background information about the three interviewees is summarized in the following table.

Table 1: background information of three interviewees

Name	Suzie	Sharon	Su
Major	Finance	Education	International relations and policy
Year of Graduation	July 2020	December 2019	December 2019
Position	Assistant financial manager	Teaching assistant & part-time English Teacher	Foreign communication work of government departments
Employer	China Construction Bank	La Trobe University Language Centre	Japanese Government

2.1 Study Trajectory

2.1.1 What was the biggest challenge in your study and how did you overcome?

Both Suzie and Sharon mentioned the discrepancy of studying styles between overseas study and the study in their universities. For Suzie, she said that when she was doing her bachelor's degree, the context of learning mainly focuses on what teachers taught in class and what the exam aimed to. The classroom was mostly teacher-oriented and teachers played the main role in class while classes in Australia focus more on students and most classes are student-oriented. Besides, Suzie changed her major from Labour and Social Security to Finance for her master's degree, thus it is different for her to get completely involved in the new study environment. Sharon had a similar experience with Suzie as she mentioned: "As I want to be an English teacher in the future, I noticed and experienced a lot on the differences between Chinese classrooms and Australian classrooms. Students are sitting around a table and

having discussions with each other.” She also found out while in master’s courses, students are encouraged to stop the lecture and ask questions in class which encourages her learning motivation. In order to overcome the differences in studying styles, both of them asked help from coordinators and other senior classmates to get used to the local study styles.

According to Su, the biggest challenge in his study life is to write essays. When he was doing his bachelor’s degree, he didn’t have to pay much attention to the essay writing while in master’s courses, it is relatively important to focus on the writing styles. There are academic supports from university, and he made several appointments and staff there helped with his writing a lot.

2.1.2 What are the most helpful skills you acquired from your subjects?

Both Suzie and Sharon mentioned that team-work skills and self-learning ability learnt from subjects benefitted them a lot in their learning careers. Many subjects in their careers include collaborative work. This requires learners to have good communicative and cooperative ability. What’s more, Suzie also included that she has learnt time-management and self-control ability. Every course has strict requirements and due time for assignments. Therefore, time management plays an essential part in the assignments. She needs to make good arrangements for the arrival of different and multiple assignments.

According to Su, he has grasped social skills and organization ability from subjects he has learnt. At first, he was too shy to express himself in class before university. Most of the subjects require students to collaborate with other students and express their perspectives. Thus, he started to express ideas with students next to him and then to a group. He constantly pushed himself to speak before other students. “Luckily, all classmates and teachers are quite supportive.” In addition, organization ability helped him not only to arrange his work orderly but also organize team work as a group leader. What's more, he also organized a student club during graduate career. Therefore, he claimed

that both abilities have laid the foundation for their future working career.

2.1.3 What is the gap between your expectation and the actual learning experience?

Suzie mentioned that she expected the new learning life would involve less pressure and much more freedom. However, she found out that the actual study is more stressed than she expected. Due to the unfamiliarity with new major, she needs to put more effort on the new major. She needs to spend a lot of time on doing research and extra readings so that she can keep up with the teacher. Sharon also has a similar experience. Due to the barrier of English language and the quantitative literature reading requirements, she needs to spend more time than those whose native speakers.

Su didn't mention much about expectations about studying life. He stated that university is a process for most people. Many people around him have already presented scene of university life. One point mentioned is that he expected that he might focus more on studying plan. While the truth is that he followed his heart and did something interesting like organizing university club.

2.1.4. What's your advice to future students?

Both Su and Suzie noted that students should choose something which they are interested in. Therefore, they will be motivated to learn and make an effort. What's more, they can take advantage of these experiences to package themselves. They become more confident for their future career. Suzie also mentioned that students should balance social life and studying life. Relaxation is also an indispensable part for study. Students should learn to relax themselves during the busy life. Meanwhile, it's essential for them to make more friends during spare time. Friends prevent loneliness and give you a chance to offer needed companionship. Therefore, it's necessary to enrich your life and reduce stress with various friends.

According to Sharon: ‘the application of theory to practical use is very crucial for most courses. Most students tend to sit in front of computer and consistent reading and writing. While they should implement what they have learnt in the book to real life. Therefore, we can achieve the aim of learning for practice.’ Further, students should grasp some basic skills like communicative and cooperative skills, which will lay the foundation for their future studying career. It is a common phenomenon that students feel confused at the beginning of university career. What they should figure out is that the real need for themselves.

2.2 Career Trajectory

2.2.1 What’s your position and responsibility of your position?

Both Suzie and Sharon had experience of internship while Su did a formal position in Japan. Suzie was an assistant personal financial manager in one of the biggest banks in China: China Construction Bank. She participated in several events: such as planning the presentation of “China Construction Bank On - Campus Promotion of Mobile Banking Service” to make sure the event moving on smoothly, assisting in completing “Knowing-your-customer” process and assisting in filing documentation for personal finance department. As a short-term intern, she worked from 8:30 am to 4 pm on weekdays for 3 months.

Sharon was an assistant teacher and a part-time English teacher. Her job was to assist senior classroom teachers’ teachings such as preparing materials before class, collecting homework from students and answering students’ questions after class. Apart from the role of assistant teachers, she was also responsible for teaching primary level students English once a week. She worked three days a week, from Monday to Wednesday.

Su has worked for Japanese Government as a coordinator for international relations in the foreign communication work of government department for two years. As a new Zealander, his primary job was to promote New Zealand

cultural education and societal problems to Japanese citizens as well as to support Japanese government with international engagement.

2.2.2 How did you get your job?

Both Suzie and Su got the job through internet. Suzie said once she decided to have an internship, she went to their job advertisement websites. There are quite a few websites in China for university students available for free. She logged into these websites on a daily basis and applied for the job which matched her major. However, the Chinese employment market is intensely competitive. The same job position might get hundreds of applications every day. Suzie also emphasised that it is really important to choose the “right job”. She said she applied for jobs which were recently posted on the website so that her application is at the top of HR’s emails. After Suzie’s resume was accepted by HR, she would go through a face-to-face interview by a senior staff and the financial manager. The process of how Su got the job was similar as Suzie’s experience. For Sharon, she got the job through a friend’s recommendation and an individual interview from senior teachers. She talked about teaching strategies and how to engage students into classroom learning in the interview which made her left a good impression.

2.2.3 What was the biggest challenge at work and how did you overcome?

Both Suzie and Sharon mentioned the lack of previous working experience was the biggest challenge. Due to these two jobs being their first jobs, they had to apply what they had learnt at school to actual work, however, there are differences. Coincidentally, both of them mentioned that seniors gave them help and advice. Suzie learnt a lot of skills on how to use excel. Sharon’s mentor advised her to observe how other senior teachers do in class and how to how to modify the lesson plan more efficiently considering the situation.

Su mentioned that the biggest challenge he faced when he worked for Japanese government was the culture difference. As he said, “...Japanese

colleagues, they never tell you what they want, they never tell you what to do. They always try to let you guess what they want to tell you. They always present the matter of the way indirectly; you have to imagine what they want you to do.” Su thought it was difficult to deal with these huge culture differences at work. After working there for a period of time, he understood the difference and adjusted himself to the local culture. He always tried to guess the potential meaning underneath.

2.2.4 How did he make a guess at the ‘hidden’ meaning?

Three interviewees all mentioned that studying is more theoretical while working is more practical. As for Suzie, she said that studying is more individual: doing homework, assignments and examinations. At work, most projects need teamwork, it required her ability to collaborate with other colleagues. As a student, Sharon is a receiver, participant and creator while she was a guider, provider and reminder at work. Su also said he has more freedom in studying but working gave him more actual practical experience of what he studied.

2.2.5 What is your goal and what would you do to achieve this?

For Suzie, her long-term goal is to be a financial analyst after her graduation. She is currently doing a master’s degree of finance, so she said to work hard in study would definitely be beneficial for her future career. Besides, she decided to get the certificate of Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) in 6 months. As for Sharon, she wants to be a good English teacher which requires her to focus on consistent learning and teaching. She said she would apply what had learned in the master’s degree into practice and improve through lifetime. Su’s goal is to find a decent job within the international relations industry such as administrator of foreign affairs and trade in New Zealand or a position within the university. He checked some requirements of his dreaming jobs and currently doing a master’s degree in international relations

at the University of Melbourne.

2.2.6 What are your suggestions for future candidates?

Suzie believed future candidates should have the ability to self-study. At work, it is normal to face something new, so to have the ability to teach oneself is important. Sharon advised that future teachers should apply the knowledge into the real teaching, they should consider what students need and prepare for the different changeable situations. Su mentioned that students should try and participate in various graduate programs in the university to make them more competitive for the job they apply for after graduation. Besides, doing some part-time internship or jobs could be beneficial for their future.

3. Recommendation and Conclusion

3.1 How to manage study and work?

According to the above interview, the following four points summarize the recommendation for future students on how to deal with study and work.

Discover your interests and what you want. "The advantage of being older is that you know yourself better and you know what you want," said by Su. When choosing a major and job direction, many people may consider whether this major is good for employment, what is the future prospect of this career, how about the income, or simply follow their parents' arrangement completely and do whatever their parents ask them to do. It is difficult to find a decent job combined perfectly with interests. But it would be painful to be engaged in work that you are not interested in at all and to study a major that you are not passionate about.

Combine study and practice reasonably. Study and practice are indispensable. Even in campus study, do not forget to go out and see the outside world. Textbook content has its theoretical guiding significance. But really grasp these theoretical knowledges, requires students grope for again and again in practical application. "Economic theory and financial analysis are completely different concepts," Suzie said. "Well, although you may feel pretty confident in theory, you still feel like you know nothing when you actually start working". On the other hand, problems at work can help you learn more about your own knowledge gaps. "It was because of two years' work in Japan that I realized I hadn't learned enough in many aspects. So I decided to go back to university. In addition, the two years' working experience also makes me clearer about the focus of learning."

Improve self-control and self-learning ability. Whether it is to study or work, ultimately rely on your own. At university, teachers cannot tell you everything in detail and monitor your study all the time. Some questions have

no right answers. Many aspects like Learning progress, elastic fast or slow supposed to rely on your own self-control. At work, if you do not actively communicate, colleagues and bosses will not give you special care because you are not sensible for your jobs. Self-control and self-learning abilities are the responsibilities that adults should take to themselves. Opportunities always go to the prepared. People with comprehensive preparation always win the opportunities. It is necessary to actively manage, improve yourself to lay a good foundation for the next life plan.

Make full use of the existing platforms of the university. University actually offers many opportunities to students. Campus recruitment platform, career guidance lectures, volunteer services, overseas exchange program, internships, union club activities and so on. These experiences could highlight your future resume. People can use these experiences to package themselves and differentiate themselves from other candidates. Su also mentioned that sometimes the quality of a university is not only reflected in its academic level and research ability, but also in its humanistic care for students. In addition, entering an excellent university also guarantees the quality of students to some extent. You'll be surrounded by great alumni and professors. Grasp this opportunity, whether it is to expand your social circle, or to learn about your life outside of your major.

3.2 Life in general: Know yourself

Suzie and Sharon, as Chinese students, tend to plan their studies and future jobs as early as possible. Their campus lives focus more on adapting to western teaching habits, overcoming language barriers and completing assignments. But Sue, with New Zealand culture background, has a more relaxed and casual living attitude. In addition, there are two years of gap period between his undergraduate and graduate. When he began working in Japan. He also attended Harvard University and the University of Melbourne for his master's degree. These studying and working experience in New Zealand, Japan, the

United States and Australia gave him a different perspective on life than other two alumni. "I know that for many Chinese students, they are used to connect their every stage closely. There was no space in between. I think if you have a clear direction of your future, such a plan is good. But the truth is, many students are actually don't know what they want to do even when they graduate," said Su.

Sharon and Suzie also confirmed this opinion. They recalled that everyone was in a state of job-hunting anxiety just before graduation. Even if they have not decided what they want to do, they will unconsciously follow the employment trend of that year. "...everyone began to go crazy about CPA and CFA certifications, as if there is a guarantee of a decent job," said Suzie.

Whether it is choosing their own career and plan their study along follow the employment trend or choosing planning completely in gap year when they are confused about their future career, then make a careful decision, they are all a choice of life. The tight pace of the former makes it possible for a person to have a successful career at an early age, while the latter experiences life by learning and practicing repeatedly, can also enrich one's experience and clarify their life orientation. How to choose, which kind of life attitude suits you better, depends on your cognition to yourself.

Appendices

Appendix A: Permission Form

Interviewee Su

By checking the box below, I agree that Chuhan Guo can collect and use the data I provide in this interview for a "Professional Literacies" Assignment 3 at the University of Melbourne. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review a copy of this assignment before it is submitted.

I give consent to use my data as described above.

Signature of the interviewer: _____

Signature of the interviewee: _____

Interviewee Suzie

By checking the box below, I agree that Jiayi Xu can collect and use the data I provide in this interview for a "Professional Literacies" Assignment 3 at the University of Melbourne. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review a copy of this assignment before it is submitted.

I give consent to use my data as described above.

Signature of the interviewer: _____

Signature of the interviewee: _____

Interviewee Sharon

By checking the box below, I agree that Wen Cheng can collect and use the data I provide in this interview for a "Professional Literacies" Assignment 3 at the University of Melbourne. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review a copy of this assignment before it is submitted.

I give consent to use my data as described above.

Signature of the interviewer: _____

Signature of the interviewee: _____

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Background

1. Personal details: nationality, major, area of interest, specialisation
2. Previous educational experience
3. Which year student? / length of working experience
4. What is the reason you choose the University of Melbourne in pursuing your study?

Study Trajectory

5. What was the biggest challenge in your study life?
6. What are the most helpful skills you acquired from your subjects?
7. What is the gap between your expectation and the actual learning?
8. What's your advice to future students?

Career Trajectory

9. What's your position and responsibility of your position?
10. How did you get your job?
11. What was the biggest challenge at work and how did you overcome?
12. What are the differences between studying and working?
13. What is your goal and what would you do to achieve this?
14. What are your suggestions for future candidates?

Recommendations and Conclusion

15. What are the differences between studying and working?
16. How to manage study?
17. How to find a job?