

# Hong Kong's testing and certification industry safeguards product and service quality

The dynamic and well-developed testing and certification (T&C) industry, along with the professionals engaged, never stops investing and improving itself — much to the overall advantages of Hong Kong.

Accounting for less than one per cent of Hong Kong's total working population, the number of people engaged in testing, inspection and certification activities may be dwarfed next to the sectors for retailing, trading and logistics, yet this key industry plays multiple roles to safeguard the prosperity of Hong Kong's economy, improving the living quality for its citizens.

"As an inseparable part of the modern supply chain management, the T&C industry supports manufacturing companies and trading partners, facilitating international trade," said Harry Yeung, Chairman of the Hong Kong Association for Testing, Inspection and Certification Limited (HKTIC), a well-established T&C association whose members consist of some of the industry's most representative organisations in Hong Kong.

The T&C industry is advancing at a steady pace. The gradual shift towards a more technology-focused economy, along with the fact that the society has become ever-more affluent, has fuelled the demand for different types of T&C services. "Growth drivers for the T&C industry are expected to derive from the areas of food services and healthcare services, as well as system and network security," noted Yeung, a 30-year veteran

in the business.

Speaking for the industry, Yeung said this ever-changing sector must brace for more challenges ahead, as competition from neighbouring regions has never been as fierce.

Yet, Yeung firmly believed that Hong Kong still enjoys solid advantages over other up-and-coming regions, citing the industry's plentiful experience and continual drive towards excellence as key contributors.

"Our association strives to improve the standards of the industry's professionals by regularly organising seminars and providing training to its members," Yeung stated, adding that the association has been active in promoting various professional qualification schemes to industry professionals.

Representatives from two key sectors of the T&C industry, namely medical testing and construction materials testing, share their vision regarding the future of the T&C industry.

## Medical laboratories – knowledge and capital intensive

It is estimated that Hong Kong has more than 100 medical laboratories, specifically dedicated to the medical and healthcare sector. These laboratories all play crucial and far-reaching roles in monitoring disease and safeguarding public health.

"The field of medical laboratories has experienced continued growth in demand over the past 15 years," said Alex Li, Chairman of the Hong Kong Association of Medical Laboratories Limited. "The increased demand for medical tests is consistently fuelled by longer life expectancy of the Hong Kong population, the growth of the health insurance market and occasionally as a result of social issues."

In fact, the medical field is supported by a reliable supply of new and highly competent professionals, i.e. Medical Laboratory Technologists, thanks to the relevant programmes

**Harry Yeung, Chairman of the HKTIC, believes Hong Kong's advantages include rich experience and the industry's continuing self-improvement.**

offered by the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong, HKU Space and Tung Wah College. However, the number of new graduates trained by local institutions annually, together with a limited number of medical professionals from overseas institutions, are still not enough to satisfy the increasing market demand, according to Li, who is himself a former committee member of the Medical Laboratory Technologists Board (MLT Board).

Citing the advantages enjoyed by Hong Kong in the field, Li spoke highly of the capability of the local practitioners, including their good technical proficiency, their communication skills and the ability to keep abreast of the latest industry developments.

Registrants to the MLT Board are classified as Parts I, II and III, each subject to specific academic and professional requirements. There are roughly 2,400 Part I, 940 Part II and 80 Part III registrants, respectively, in Hong Kong.

Looking to the future, Li expected the medical laboratory sector to continue to be a knowledge-intensive field, while expressing his hope that research carried out in public hospitals in conjunction with Hong Kong's research universities can be used to shed light on the development of the sector.

## Construction materials testing – all shapes, forms and stages

Testing construction materials and structures, which come in various shapes, forms and stages, can be a capital-intensive business that requires extensive knowledge and craft, according to Mr Lee Wai-kwok, Chairman of the Association of Construction Materials Laboratories Ltd.



**(From right to left) Alex Li, Chairman of Hong Kong Association of Medical Laboratories Limited, and Mrs Marianne Leung, Vice-Chairman, have witnessed increasing demand for services provided by medical laboratories over the past 15 years.**



**Lee Wai-kwok, Chairman of the Association of Construction Materials Laboratories Ltd, takes pride in the fact that the testing and certification industry contributes to building safety and quality.**

Lee took pride in the fact that the testing and certification industry contributes to ensuring the safety of buildings by offering professional testing services for construction materials, while playing an important role in facilitating the operations of its customers—including construction companies and exporters. Construction laboratories and inspection companies in Hong Kong are providing testing services for a wide range of construction materials, including concrete, steel, tiles, paint, doors, etc. There are also product certification services provided by certification bodies which offer third party certification to promote product quality through upstream control.

Having served in the industry for over three decades, Lee knew first-hand the strengths of Hong Kong's T&C industry. He spoke highly of the technical competence and professionalism of the industry's practitioners, and the fact that the robust accreditation system under the Government's Hong Kong Accreditation Service (HKAS) helps maintain the high standard of the industry.

Another key advantage of this sector, added Lee, is that the industry tends to be dynamic and responsive to the needs of different markets. "Instead of dealing with just one standard, testing laboratories in Hong Kong often offer services to customers with different regulatory needs. The ability of the testing laboratories in Hong Kong to provide testing services with reference to various international standards is a treasure. It is a practice that puts Hong Kong in a significant role in international trade."

While Hong Kong's position as the hub for T&C may face challenges from neighbouring regions, one thing which is beyond doubt: there is Hong Kong's T&C industry professionals do their relentless best to hold high the world-class standards of their practices — so as to ensure quality and safety regardless of which sector their work covers — whether it is to perform vital tests in top medical laboratories, or to test construction materials for strength and endurance. Their key aim is the same: to strive for the continued well-being of the people of Hong Kong.

