Technology has always amazed me. In less than 100 years, it made the impossible possible, stunning people worldwide. One recent example was the use of AI developed by OpenAI in esports that could dominate the DOTA 2 world championship. The AI’s victory was proof that automated computer technology can adapt and deal with complex situations, surpassing that of humans. As an esports fan, I was exceptionally excited about the advancement of AI in technology with its potential to make the unthinkable possible and the complicated easy. When thinking ahead, I firmly believe that AI has unlimited potential, especially in improving our quality of life. AI’s prospects in healthcare, solving environmental issues, increasing efficiencies, and many more have motivated me to want to contribute to AI technologies' development. Thus, my affinity for computer science.

Nonetheless, before it was my dream to contribute to the future of AI technology, I was interested in math, which involves many problem-solving and algorithms. I've enjoyed learning math since primary school, solving intricate problems that require critical analysis. Since the 2nd grade, I have participated in the Kangaroo Math Contest and, later, expanded my competition pool as I participated in more prestigious competitions, such as SASMO and SEAMO. Even though the results weren’t as good as they are now -  winning only silver or bronze awards - I never gave up on progress. I never stopped learning in pursuit of more mathematical and problem-solving techniques, such as calculating combinations and permutations, modular arithmetic, and standard deviation.

By the end of 11th grade, my hard work towards excellence finally paid off as I garnered gold medals in these prestigious competitions. Also, I started a math-loving community at school to continue my passion for mathematics. In this community, my goal is to share my math competition experiences with my peers and juniors who are also passionate about math so that they can excel and make achievements in math. We would regularly discuss challenging math olympiad problems to train their problem-solving approach. Seeing them excel in math competitions months later was very fulfilling, and I am glad to share the same passion for math with them.

Eventually, math paved my way toward computer science. It happened during the beginning of COVID-19 in 2020, which halted many activities, including school, competitions, internships, and volunteering. Fortunately, the pandemic has allowed me to explore more into applying math to the real world. I first learned the fundamentals of coding and used them to solve programming challenges, such as sorting an array in descending order, creating various shapes, and creating a calculator app. From these explorations, I realized that math and computer science came hand in hand as they both require critical and analytical skills in the form of algorithmic and structured thought processes. Furthermore, computer science enables the use of math to innovate and create life-changing software and technologies, such as the invention of smartphones and the internet, that play a vital role in flourishing people’s way of life.

As I learned other programming languages (Javascrpit, Java, Python, and C# to name a few) through courses, Youtube videos, and bootcamps, I’ve found that coding has become my hobby and passion. I would continue to deepen my understanding and problem-solving skills with Hackerrank: a website to practice critical and analytical thinking through coding. Afterward, I continued to take on higher level challenges by learning more advanced (lower-level) programming languages, such as creating websites and participating in hackathons. Such tasks equipped me with academic experience and soft skills for my future, such as leadership, teamwork, time management, web development. One of my most challenging yet fun projects that enabled me to apply all that I’ve learned is to create an electricity awareness website. I used HTML for the foundation, CSS for the design, and JavaScript for the interactive aspects of the website. Upon the successful development of the electricity awareness project, I am currently working towards developing a more interactive platform called Ponder: a web platform that aims to spread water awareness and reduce freshwater consumption through games and challenges.

My journey in programming has been challenging and fulfilling at the same time. However, this is only the end of the beginning. My next step is to enroll in the best environment for me to continue to pursue my dream of evolving AI technologies, and HKU’s computer science program is my answer. HKU’s learning outcome that focuses on practical application and continuous development to evolve the future is aligned with my exploration path into computer science. HKU also offers a learning program that allows the students to focus on AI development and its application, which is aligned with my future goals. Moreover, I am looking forward to having the opportunity to contribute to the future of AI through the AI, robotics, and visual computing research group available in HKU. Therefore, HKU’s learning environment makes me excited to pursue my bachelor’s degree at HKU.

Hi Tristan,

You have written a great essay – it is structured well and I think you have good balance of outside classroom experiences and inside classroom experiences in computer science. There are some grammatical fixes and places where I feel like you could be more concise in your wording – you may have enough word count but its always best to be concise in some places where there’s no need to be as descriptive as in other sentences. I’m not sure if HongKong personal statement’s need this info about extracurriculars but do add them If you would like to.

So, I think you should add a small paragraph to mention your interests outside of compsci just to show yourself as a more rounded student, it can be brief because it shouldn’t be a large part to take the focus off of compsci. Feel free to ask your mentor any questions about what I’ve mentioned! Good luck.

* Anushka