**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*intro me\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE YOUR BIGGEST PROFESSIONAL FAILURE, AND WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM IT?**

I was managing a project where a new client wanted a large number of unique product descriptions written to improve the SEO ranking of their site. Because they were a new client and I wanted to impress them with the kind of results we could produce, I assured them we could have it back to them in two weeks. I thought this was doable with multiple writers working on the project, but in the end, it took an extra week, and they were not happy.

We apologized and reassured them that the mistake wouldn’t happen again. I realized that it’s far better to under-promise and over-deliver. The client isn’t going to be upset when you are clear about what the timeline is from the beginning. Problems arise when you can’t meet promised deadlines. I used this experience to be more cautious in managing client expectations. For the next client project I worked on, I made sure to include extra time for unforeseen circumstances and told them we would deliver in four weeks. We delivered in three, and they couldn’t have been more thrilled.

**Tell me about the project that you are most proud of. What did you do? How did it turn out?**

Currently a postdoctoral fellow in HKUST, Dr. YIN Ran began his journey at the University as an MPhil student in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering in 2014, and obtained his MPhil and PhD degrees in 2016 and 2020 respectively. During his PhD studies, he has published 22 papers in leading journals in the field of environmental engineering, and is also the co-inventor of two granted patents. His remarkable achievements and significant advanced water treatment research has earned him the School of Engineering PhD Research Excellence Award 2020-21.

As an engineering PhD student myself, I was delighted to have the chance to speak with Dr. Yin. While he generously shared his insights, I saw the spark in his eyes that captured his fondness for research and his career.

**1. Why did you choose to come to HKUST for your MPhil and PhD studies?**

When I was working on my final year project about water treatment during my undergraduate studies at Nanjing University, I grew interests in doing research, thanks to my advisor, an expert in water treatment technology and environmental engineering, who inspired me a lot. HKUST is one of the best research universities in Asia, therefore I chose to embark on my journey here. Through the training of my MPhil studies, I confirmed my interest in doing research and desired to pursue an academic career, so I decided to continue with PhD studies upon graduating from the MPhil program.

**2. What does your typical day look like?**

I often spend long hours on campus, coming at around 9am and leaving at about 10pm from Monday to Friday. You can usually find me working in the lab or the Teaching Assistants’ office. When I was a student, my daily routine used to be running experiments during the day, and working on reading and writing in the evening. Now as a postdoc, I spend more time on writing papers, teaching, and working with junior students.

**3. With such busy schedules, how do you manage your time? What are the top three on your priority list?**

My top three priorities are working on research proposals, papers, and meeting junior students. To keep up with these tasks, I like to plan ahead. Some people start working on a project or assignment right before the due date, I am also a "deadline fighter", but in a different way. When I need to complete assignments or projects, I often set many internal deadlines for myself, usually a few days ahead of the due date. I mark them clearly on my calendar, and make sure I observe the schedule and meet the deadlines. This is the way I keep my work organized and efficient.

**4. How do you cope with stress and pressure?**

Outside work and research, I like playing basketball and watching the replay of NBA games. The basketball court is where I relieve my stress. I also talk to my girlfriend when I am stressed, who is always a good listener to my thoughts.

I gradually realize that, as we gain experience through withstanding different situations and challenges, we become stronger, in turns, we can convert part of the stress and pressure into motivation.

**5. What was the greatest challenge that you have encountered in your PhD journey, and how did you overcome it?**

One major challenge is about how to strike a balance between the scientific value and practical value of the research work. When we finish a project, we formulate and submit a paper. After that, we receive feedback from the reviewers. Sometimes, we could get comments from the reviewers that the paper is too scientific and not practical enough, or too practical with insufficient fundamental novelty. In fact, I am still trying to find the balance.

**6. Every student could experience a research block when experiments do not seem to be working out, what motivates you to keep going at such times?**

I trust science. I believe if a test is well designed, the theory should work. Therefore, whenever I encounter a problem in my tests and research, I usually examine each step of the experiment in detail to look for the cause of problem, or seek help from someone to help with double-checking, could be my supervisor or a senior student. Behind all these, the motivation probably comes from the curiosity for truth. I will not be stopped in the face of obstacles.

**7. Who will you seek help from when you encounter problems? What are the inspirations you gained from your PhD supervisor?**

When I face problems in life, I first try to solve them by myself; and if I cannot find a solution on my own, I will look for advice and help from my parents and friends.

For problems which are related to my studies or more technical, I usually reach out to my PhD supervisor Prof. SHANG Chii. Prof. Shang indeed influenced me a great deal, in many aspects, from research to my attitude on work and life. Prof. Shang taught me how to catch a fish instead of giving me a fish. He takes every challenge as a learning process, and stay curiosity towards new things around. Now, I also take after him in the way of supervising and working with junior students.

**9. Other than the mentorship from your supervisor, what are some other things you find thankful to HKUST?**

My journey as a MPhil and PhD student in HKUST has been rewarding. The University has provided many learning and training opportunities. The high-quality courses and seminars, as well as the well-established equipment in labs are crucial to facilitate my learning and research. I am particularly grateful that the University has been playing a supportive role to students attending conferences and exchange programs, which are valuable chances for us to build our network, learn and exchange new ideas.

**10. Do you like reading books? Can you recommend a book that inspires you most?**

I like poems, especially classical Chinese poetry 300 Tang Poems, which are concise, yet containing various meaning based on different interpretations. They give much food for thoughts, which could be very inspiring for work and life.

I also like biographies of celebrities and prominent figures. A book I would recommend is The Mamba Mentality: How I Play by the late Kobe Bryant, the world famous professional basketball player. The stories of how he trained himself, how he treated each game, and how he pursued championship in each game season, encouraged me a lot.

**11. What advice would you give to your past self and your future self – five years ago and five years from now?**

Speaking to myself five years ago, I would say "be more open-minded to learn things from different disciplines". When I assist my supervisor to write a new research grant proposal, often times, the scope of research is interdisciplinary, which I found my knowledge not sufficient to cater for these new areas. Therefore, if I could meet my younger self, around the time when I began my PhD studies, I would ask myself to go beyond the boundaries and learn more.

As for the future me in five years’ time, I would remind myself to “stay hungry, stay foolish". I hope I will be able to maintain my curiosity towards new things and keep moving forward. At the same time, I wish the future me will remain humble, and never stop learning from different people around me, and from each challenge or failure I face.

**12. What is the secret behind your accomplishments? From your experience, could you share a piece of advice to students considering pursuing PhD studies in engineering?**

Well, there is no secret behind. We all make mistakes, this happens no matter in research or in life. However, when I make mistakes, big or small, I treat them very seriously. I have been trying my very best to learn from my mistakes and take these opportunities to grow, in order not to make the same mistake twice.

"Make mistakes, don't fake perfection. But don't make the same mistake twice." This would be my advice, indeed, not just to students who are planning to pursue PhD studies in engineering, but also to all junior students.

# Situational Questions

1. **You've been working on a project for two weeks when your supervisor comes in and calls for a total overhaul, forcing you to start from scratch. How do you respond**

**5. How do you stay positive during difficult changes at work?**

**3. How do you manage changes in the workplace?**

"I recently experienced a similar situation at my previous job, where a client wanted to completely change the design of their website a month into the project. As the frontend developer, it meant that I would need to completely discard all of my work and start over.

But I'm able to stay positive because I keep reminding myself that change is inevitable in the business world. As an employee, I have a part in helping the company I work for succeed, and I take that responsibility seriously. I make sure to keep thinking of the benefits of the change and that, although the change may be difficult, it will result in positive updates for the organization."

at that time my client had agreed to a new budget and timeline, but I did my best to complete the task in origin timeline, I worked 60 hours per week, so I implemented and launched it in time successfully.

[**What would be the best answer if your interview asks you, "Explain Agile"?**](https://www.quora.com/What-would-be-the-best-answer-if-your-interview-asks-you-Explain-Agile)

Agile seeks to deliver the most value in the least amount of time. Agile involves team work in short iterative cycles, called sprints, instead of planning everything in advance. The sprint team is small - typically 3-8 people which is empowered to self-organize and participate in the decision making on what is to be worked on next. The sprint consists 1-2 weeks in length goal of completing all the work and delivering completed and testable features by the end. Communication is critical so there is often a "stand up" everyday where the team checks in. The intent is to keep the entire team aware of what everyone is working on - to increase collaboration and avoid rework or overlapping work.

Benefits: Short iterative cycles allow for faster feedback from stakeholders and customers. The team will have more direct connection to the the planning and outcomes and therefore can derive more meaning and purpose from their work. For projects that will encounter multiple changes, the primary benefit is the flexibility of agile to adapt quickly and shift focus, hence the origin of the name.

Drawbacks: Some projects are not easily broken into smaller cycles, which can make agile implementation more challenging. While agile seeks to complete each cycle to the point of being "done" the actual project may always have more stories remaining so that projects can seem to be never ending. Many traditional stakeholders and managers can be date driven, and agile is work driven or feature driven and so conflicts can arise.

### How to collaborate with designers as a frontend developer.

The gap between designers and developers often slows workflows and makes it harder to bring products to market. Without strong collaboration between your design and development product teams, you will likely find that your company has to correct a lot of mistakes before you can finalize a product and release it to consumers.

We don’t have to tolerate the designer-developer gap.

[Creating a design system](https://www.uxpin.com/docs/design-systems/design-systems/#creating-a-design-system) that uses the same components for designers and developers is the most important thing you can do to bridge the gap between teams. Your design system should provide everything that your people need during the designing and coding phases, including the product’s approved:

* Typography
* Colors
* Icons
* Photographs
* GIFs
* Sounds
* Interactive elements

We can improve every step of production by using the same design system for your designers and developers so that they don’t waste time on deciding which font or color to use, and how to code this button and that form. Traditionally, companies struggle with this approach because they take an image-based approach to building products and you need to put a lot of effort to maintain the design system. After the design team finishes its work, developers need to find ways to make components functional. A code-based approach eliminates the gap by giving designers and developers access to a real single source of truth that can be reused anytime.

[See examples of design systems.](https://adele.uxpin.com/)

**Improve communications between web designers and front-end developers**

Your designer and development teams need easy ways to communicate with each other. Not too long ago, you had limited ways to improve communication between teams. You could have them share a workspace or add everyone to a social media group.

Today, you have ample tools to improve communication and collaboration, even when your team members work remotely. Some of your best options include applications like:

* [Slack](https://slack.com/)
* [Trello](https://trello.com/)
* [Google Workspace](https://workspace.google.com/)

When you need a replacement for face-to-face conversations, you can use video conferencing apps like:

* [Zoom](https://zoom.us/)
* [GoToMeeting](https://www.gotomeeting.com/)
* [Microsoft Teams](https://www.microsoft.com/)

[**Invite designers and developers to product design brainstorming sessions**](https://www.notion.so/Invite-designers-and-developers-to-product-design-brainstorming-sessions-f95006051e7b40da895d1ebba11e3071)

Teammates get left out of critical brainstorm sessions far too often. The project manager might think to invite the development team’s leader for insight into the challenges of adding certain features to a product.

Get more designers and developers involved in brainstorming sessions to build camaraderie, share ideas, and discover innovative concepts that you might have missed without everyone’s participation.

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