

President's address

Mr Council Chairman, distinguished guests, colleagues, parents, graduates, ladies and gentlemen:

Please allow me to reverse the order of my speech by first addressing our graduating class. I would like to congratulate all of you graduates on this most joyful and emotional day. You, your family and your teachers have put in so much to get you to this point. This day belongs to you and to them all.

It has been two years since I took up the presidency at Lingnan, and the experience has been enriching and inspiring. A year ago Hong Kong was a society in turmoil, and Lingnan also witnessed and felt the ripples of the unrest. As a university president, I was inevitably caught up in the cross-currents.

Today, our city has not entirely healed its wounds, and the parties with conflicting views have yet to take major steps toward reconciliation. We all want the best for our beloved city. But when there are competing and uncompromising visions, voices, and high passions, common sense and civility may not always prevail. To emerge from this predicament, we need to seek workable solutions and build consensus. From this perspective, I would like to invite you to re-examine a crucial concept that is the hallmark of the educated. I am referring to “critical thinking”, which is a key feature of university education. Put simply, “critical thinking” is a rational way of approaching and analysing problems, events, and phenomena, based on evidence and experience. It is strictly a matter of mindset, reflection, and in-depth analysis. Moreover, a major component of “critical thinking” is the willingness to actively listen, even when the views expressed are not always compatible with our own.

This definition, with its positive connotation, is a far cry from the common, but to me and many others erroneous, Chinese translation, “批判性思維”, which has a distinct negative connotation of fault-finding and outright criticism. To restore the original meaning of this

term, we don't need to look further than the Chinese Classic *The Doctrine of the Mean*, where one would find two of the five elements of learning emphasised in ancient China, namely, “慎思” and “明辨”. The first element, “慎思” refers to careful reasoning; the second element, “明辨”, concerns the ability to apply the proper tools of reasoning and inquiry. Together, these two elements convey precisely and concisely the meaning of “critical thinking”.

Since February this year our University has officially adopted the term “慎思明辨” as the Chinese equivalent of “critical thinking” in our University's mission statement and core values, and I hope it will stay with you forever. I have found this Chinese term to be truly insightful and instructive. That is why I am taking every opportunity to share this wisdom with others, as in the graduation ceremonies of several high schools to which I was invited as the guest speaker.

But what if we have different views and positions even after our best efforts applying critical thinking? As captured by Lingnan's core values, we cherish mutual respect, diversity of opinions, and an open mindset. In fact, respecting differences is the very foundation of democracy, something we all want for our society.

The president of a preeminent university in the US recently expressed her views about the younger generation. In particular, she is concerned by the way young people fail to understand their dependence on others, and their lack of appreciation for civic values and duties, and institutions that support our social order and shape our way of life. I share this concern, and would urge you to be cautious and modest when attempting to make changes to the society that belongs not just to you, but also to others. In a real democracy, advocates of change need to convince the skeptics before changes can be made.

I was young once. I understand the urgency of youth, its idealism, its impulse to do good and change society for the better. But idealism and wanting to do good are not sufficient, because the world's problems are often complex, and do not lend themselves to easy or quick solutions.

As you are the future of our society, I urge you to help society generate viable solutions to difficult problems and build consensus and cohesion socially and politically. In a democratic society, great leaders tend to be great compromisers, good at reasoning and persuading others whose views may be entirely different.

When I was young like you, I, too, was full of ideals and desires to change the world. But I chose to begin by preparing myself for a life of service with skills that are socially useful. After completing my bachelor's degree, I pursued further studies in economics as I was planning to work for international organisations, such as the World Bank. I wanted to be part of a noble effort to improve the economic well-being of people around the world, especially those in developing countries. But I soon realised that promoting economic development is a highly complex process that cannot be reduced to simple dogmas or quick fix. I therefore studied methodically in order to acquire the necessary skills in economic analysis and knowledge of economic development. I resisted the temptation to oversimplify problems and jump to conclusions. I learned to listen, to respect people with opposing views. To me, this is applying “critical thinking” in real life, where complex and often conflicting interests and values are prevalent.

I also realised long ago that I was not the smartest person around, and I learned that being humble gets things done a lot faster than pressurising others. I want you all to live a full and productive life in a society that values your contributions. A respectful attitude and the readiness to listen, together, will go a long way. While this may sound obvious or even trivial, I believe it will be indispensable as you go through life.

Regardless of what you choose to pursue in life, I hope our University motto, “Education for Service” (in Chinese, “作育英才，服務社會”) and our cherished “Lingnan Spirit” (marked by passion, loyalty, perseverance, openness to different ideas and cultures, and a readiness to serve) will continue to be your guides.

And now, let me congratulate this year's graduates once again. We live in difficult times,

but I know that Lingnanians are not afraid of difficulties, obstacles or challenges. Wherever you may be, carve out your future, go far, and fly high; yet, at the same time, you should always remember to uphold our core values and the enduring Lingnan Spirit.

Whatever may happen in the world outside, the University will always be your second home. Lingnan is eager to hear from our sons and daughters. We are, and shall always be, one family.

Thank you.

校長講辭

校董會主席、各位嘉賓、同事、家長、畢業同學、各界朋友：

請容許我今天把講辭的次序倒轉過來，在一開始首先向我們的畢業同學致意。今天是你們最喜悅和感受至深的大日子，讓我獻上衷心的祝賀。同學們所以走到今天，實有賴你們自己、家人和師長的努力，所以這一天是屬於你們和他們每一位的。

我出任嶺大校長已兩年，當中的體驗既充實豐富，亦富有啟發。去年這個時候，香港處於一個動盪的境況，嶺大也見證和感受到這動盪所引起的波瀾，而身為大學校長的我，更是無可避免地被捲進其中。

到了今天，我們的城市還沒有完全復原過來；持相反觀點的羣體，並未有為謀求和解而踏出重要的步伐。我們都深愛香港，並期望這城市一切美好。然而，當社會存在著對立和互不妥協的各種願景、聲音以至強烈的激情時，常理和文明不一定得到維護。若要解除這種困境，我們必需尋找可行的辦法，努力凝聚共識。基於此，我想請你們重新檢視一個非常重要的概念——「慎思明辨」(critical thinking)——這是受過良好教育的人都擁有的特質，亦是大學教育的重點。簡單而言，「慎思明辨」是一種基於證據和經驗去處理和分析問題、事件及現象的理性方法，是關乎一個人的思維方式、反思及深入分析的能力。而「慎思明辨」的一個重要元素是願意主動聆聽，即使對方的觀點與自己不一樣。

“Critical thinking”的英文定義是正面的，跟其廣泛被使用的中文翻譯「批判性思維」有很大落差，因為「批判性思維」帶有找毛病及指責的負面含義。很多人包括我自己亦認為這個翻譯有誤差。要找出這個英文用語的原意，可以借用中國經典《中庸》論述古代治學之道的五大階段其中兩個，即「慎思」及「明辨」。「慎思」指謹慎思考；「明辨」指懂得運用合適的思考及探究方法。這兩個部分正好簡潔準確地把“critical thinking”的正確意思表達出來。

自今年二月起，大學正式採用了「慎思明辨」代替「批判性思維」以陳述大學的使命和核心價值。我衷心盼望你們能把其意義永記心中。我認為這個中文用語具有見

地和指導意義。這就是為甚麼我把握每個機會與他人分享當中的智慧，包括在多家中學的畢業禮上致辭時亦與中學生分享這個訊息。

假若我們已努力慎思明辨，但大家依然抱持不同看法和立場，應怎樣做呢？正如嶺大的核心價值所顯示的，我們應當：互相尊重包容、接受不同意見、保持開放態度。事實上，尊重差異正是我們所追求的民主的重要根基。

美國一所優秀大學的校長最近表達了她對年輕一代的看法，她特別注意到時下年輕人的一些現象，包括：未能明白自己需要倚靠他人，未能理解公民價值和義務，以及未能了解維持社會秩序和維護我們生活方式的體制。我也有同樣關注，故此希望你们在試圖改變社會的同時，也採取謹慎和謙遜的態度，因為社會不單只屬於你，也屬於其他人。在一個真正民主的國度，主張改革的人需要想辦法說服對改革存疑的成員，才可以實行改變。

我也曾年輕過，明白年輕人都充滿理想，熱切地去維護正義和改變社會。但只有理想和正義感是不足夠的，因為世界上的問題往往十分複雜，不會有簡單和快速的解決方法。

你們是社會的未來，因此我懇請你們幫忙為社會種種難題想出可行的解決方案，在社會及政治的層面凝聚共識。在民主社會裡，偉大的領袖必定同時精於謀求調和與妥協，講究論證，並善於說服持有不同觀點的人。

我像你們那麼年輕時，同樣充滿理想，渴望改變世界。但我選擇首先為自己裝備好終身服務社會所需的技能。完成學士課程後，我繼續進修經濟學，那是因為我打算到世界銀行這類國際組織工作，希望參與其中，共同作出崇高的努力，改善世界各國人民的經濟狀況，特別是發展中國家的人民。但我很快意識到，推動經濟發展是一個高度複雜的過程，不能簡化成一些簡單的教條，也沒有快速的解決方法。因此，我決定有系統地學習經濟分析技巧及有關經濟發展的知識。我拒絕把問題過度簡化和妄下結論；我學習聆聽，尊重持不同意見的人。對我來說，這就是把「慎思明辨」應用在充滿複雜和對立的利益及價值觀的現實世界裡。

很久以前，我已明白自己不是最聰明的人，也認識到懷著謙遜態度，較咄咄逼人更有助解決問題。我希望你們擁有充實而有意義的人生，你們的付出會受到社會的重視。能夠尊重他人、虛心聆聽，有助你們走得更遠。也許這是老生常談，甚或微不足道，但我深信在你們人生路上這是不可或缺的。

無論你們選擇追求怎樣的人生，我希望嶺大的校訓「作育英才，服務社會」，以及我們珍惜的「嶺南精神」(熱情、忠誠、堅毅、容納不同的思想和文化、樂於服務人群)可成為你們永遠的座右銘。

現在，讓我再次衷心恭賀今屆所有畢業的同學。我們雖然身處一個艱難時期，但我知道嶺南人是不畏困難和障礙，且勇於接受挑戰的。不管你們將來身在何處，在努力開拓未來，翱翔遠方的時候，我懇請大家勿忘堅守嶺大的核心價值和不朽的「嶺南精神」。

不論外面的世界發生甚麼事情，大學永遠是你們的第二個家。嶺大熱切期盼著子女們的好消息。現在，將來，我們永遠都是一家人。

謝謝各位。