

Research finds strategies to overcome ethnic discrimination in accounting industry

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George Huang, from the School of Accounting and Law, has found accounting graduates from an ethnic minority have a harder time entering the accounting industry in Wellington than New Zealanders.

His research confirms previous studies that show Chinese and Indian nationals are more likely to be excluded from entering the workforce, based on factors that are determined by their ethnicity. But Dr Huang's study goes a step further and finds those from the Middle East, Africa and other Asian countries are also more likely to face discrimination than their New Zealand counterparts.

Dr Huang explains that employers typically have two streams of criteria when hiring new employees. The first is based on technical knowledge, skills and qualifications. The second includes social and cultural factors such as mannerisms, oral language skills and local experience, which are most often determined by the applicant's [ethnic background](#).

"I found New Zealand society can place too much attention on social and cultural constructs. When employers do this, they can overlook the capability and functionality of the accountant.

"The second part of my thesis provides several strategies for aspirant accountants to overcome potential discrimination on social and cultural bases.

"Some strategies, such as cutting out the overseas qualifications or

experience from their CV, or changing to an English surname are not so positive, but really worked," he says.

Dr Huang also found aspiring accountants had more success finding a job if they focussed on niche roles and developed local social networks in the industry.

Forty-five [accounting](#) graduates from across 20 ethnic backgrounds were interviewed in Wellington in early 2014 for the research. Of those, 38 have since found employment appropriate to their qualifications.

Professor Rachel Baskerville from Victoria's School of Accounting and Commercial Law says Dr Huang's research is "a unique contribution" to other studies on exclusion factors in the workplace. "He was able to give voice to many aspiring professionals who are otherwise silent," she says.

Provided by Victoria University

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