

1 July 2013, **It is not an easy task to graduate with a Bachelor and Masters degree within five years, given the medium of instructions was your third language, in this case, the Chinese language.**

Sofia Loren Moala, deserves to be congratulated for spending three years to achieve her Bachelor of Management in Science and two years to achieve her MA in Business Administration from the University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei City, Anhui Province in the People's Republic of China.



Sofia Loren Moala is the eldest of eight children. Her parents are Panepasa Moala from Ha'afeva, Ha'apai and Temaleti Havea from Niua 'Eua and currently residing at Tokomololo, Tongatapu. Sofia spent her Primary School years at Ha'afeva, Kotu and 'O'ua when her father was a Primary School teacher in these remote islands. In 1993, she passed the Secondary School Examination and was rated the second amongst the Primary School students who passed to Tonga High School. After she completed six years (1994 – 1999) at Tonga High School, she spent one year as a Computer Operator for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry at Tokomololo branch. During 2001 – 2006, she studied for her Diploma in Education at the Tonga Institute of Education, Nuku'alofa majoring in Economics and Home Economics. Upon graduation, Sofia spent two years teaching at Tonga High School where she met the Chinese teacher teaching Chinese Language, who encouraged her to apply for a scholarship to study in China through the Chinese Embassy in Nuku'alofa.

Following the normal procedure for Foreign students awarded a scholarship by the China Scholarship Council, Sofia had to study Chinese language for one year in 2007 at Anhui Normal

University before moving to the University of Science and Technology of China to study her major, a four year programme of Bachelor in Management of Science, which she successfully achieved in three years (2008 – 2011). The university contacted the Embassy of the Kingdom of Tonga in June 2011, to share the successful story of Sofia and the good news that the university had offered her a scholarship to continue her studies for a MA in Business Administration. According to a University spokesman, the MA courses is normally for three years but Sofia has successfully completed all requirements in two years (2011 – 2013).

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Tonga acknowledges the great achievement by Sofia. USCT invited the Ambassador, His Excellency Siamelie Latu and His spouse, Sesilia Latu to attend Sofia's graduation on Saturday 22 June 2013. The Ambassador proudly thanked the President of the University, the Professors and the Christian Community with whom Sofia worshipped every Sunday, for all their support. Sofia has made many friends and is very popular at the University Community. Sofia was given another opportunity by the university to continue her studies for a PhD but she refused due to personal reasons.

When asked about the challenges she had encountered during her studies, Sofia reported that the main challenge was the studying of the Chinese language but where there is a will, there is a way. One of the main contributions she wanted to share with her fellow scholarship students from Tonga is her faith in God. "During my time here in China, my relationship with God was very close. There were many challenges like homesick, the language, the unfamiliar environment and being the only Tongan here made it hard for me to survive. But with the help of the Good Lord, I was able to jump all the hurdles in front of me and to have greater courage to achieve my studies."

Sofia is a good role model for future scholarship students from Tonga. The Embassy of the Kingdom of Tonga in Beijing proudly acknowledges her achievement and hope to receive more students like Sofia in future to study in China.

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## Successful Tongan student in the People's Republic of China

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