



# Guide to Hong Kong Universities





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# Hong Kong Universities: In a Nutshell

- ◇ High-ranking globally
- ◇ International cohorts
- ◇ Apply directly to the course
- ◇ Focused on specific subjects/ disciplines
- ◇ World-leading research departments

## Table of Contents

1. Application Overview
2. Why Study in Hong Kong?
3. Different Types of Degree
4. Understanding Entry Requirements
5. How Courses Are Different
6. Special Subjects
7. Different Types of University
8. Understanding League Tables

# Why Study in Hong Kong?



## Quick Overview

Hong Kong has been striving to become an international education hub. Therefore, Hong Kong higher education institutions have been taking measures to welcome international students. It recently increased the quota for international students at undergraduate level to 20% of the enrollments. There are a total of around 40 institutions.

The education system is largely modelled on the UK system, although the undergraduate programmes are more of a mix of UK and US systems. In fact back in 2012 undergraduate programmes at public universities moved from a three-year specialized focus system, similar to that of the UK, to a four-year holistic, student-oriented model similar to that of the US.

Besides being one of the best cities in the world for students, in Hong Kong you can find quality post-secondary institutions and you can pick different pathways to pursue your post-secondary goals.

Studying in Hong Kong gives you immersion in Chinese (particularly Cantonese), culture while still being able to share your experience with many other foreign students, with English spoken by most people.



### High Quality Education

Hong Kong has both the highest-ranked Asian universities in the QS World University Rankings (Hong Kong University and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology). It also has 6 universities in the QS top 300, so for a small place, it's a higher education powerhouse!



### Connectivity & travel opportunities

Students report at least 90% satisfaction with their experience in the UK. The UK has the highest international student experience satisfaction ratings for English-speaking countries. The UK is popular with international students from all over the world.



### Melting pot of culture

Hong Kong attracts people from all over the world and is a melting pot of Chinese, Asian and Western cultures, with truly something for everyone. It is a cosmopolitan highly modern city, with historical colonial buildings, beautiful countryside, and culturally significant temples.



## Calendar

The application calendar of Hong Kong institutions varies greatly across institutions, faculties, departments or even individual programmes. For studies beginning in the autumn term (September), application deadlines may fall as early as November the year before, or as late as May in the same year you plan to start your studies. In addition, some institutions will organize the application process by application rounds such as 'early', 'main' and 'late' rounds.

You should check on the individual University's website which round(s) apply to international students. In some cases, the early round is dedicated to international students' only. But some institutions may offer late applications for some of their programmes.

### HONG KONG ADMISSIONS

#### TIMELINE

This graph gives you an overview of the application process for Hong Kong. Note that every university is different, so you'll need to check deadlines and requirements on the university website and make sure they apply to your programme.

STARTING POINT

#### 02 GET TALKING TO THEM

Contact the institutions to get more specific information regarding admission requirements, deadlines and programme-specific criteria - confirm what paperwork you'll need to do AND when you need to submit it

UNIVERSITY  
OPTIONS

01

#### MAKE YOUR CHOICE

Select the institutions that best suit your personality and goals. Remember, this will be your community for the next 3-4 years, so do your research and talk to people if possible!

CONFIRM  
REQUIREMENTS

02

SUBMIT  
APPLICATION

03

#### SEND REQUIREMENTS TO HONG KONG

Submit your application to the programmes you have chosen, ensuring to get all the documents to the university by the deadline.

#### 04 ATTEND INTERVIEWS

Some institutions may invite you for interview before deciding whether or not to make an offer. This can be conducted in person or via a videoconference call.

04

#### RESPOND TO OFFERS

##### ACCEPT/ REJECT OFFERS

You may get more than one offer from different institutions/ programmes in Hong Kong. Take your time (but make sure to respond by the deadline!) and make the right decision for you.

# Universities in Hong Kong



Hong Kong's higher education institutions are divided into publicly-funded and self-financed institutions. Self-financing educational programmes refer to sub-degree level programmes (see an explanation of sub-degrees on the next page!) provided by local self-financing entities. Publicly funded degree programs tend to have a better recognition in the job market, which is why often local students opt to undertake a sub-degree program at self-financing institutions to then subsequently seek admission to publicly-funded universities.

## Public Universities

City University of Hong Kong (#55) similarly ranked include: Brown University (#56), University of Warwick (#54)  
Hong Kong Baptist University (#277) similarly ranked includes: Rutgers University- New Brunswick (#283)  
Lingnan University (#601-650) similarly ranked include: University of Manitoba, Sichuan University  
Chinese University of Hong Kong (#49) similarly ranked include: UNSW Sydney (#45), University of Bristol (#51)  
Hong Kong Polytechnic University (#106) similarly ranked include: Trinity Dublin (#104), Yonsei University (#107)  
Hong Kong UST (#37) similarly ranked include: Kyoto University (#35), Northwestern University (#34)  
University of Hong Kong (#25) similarly ranked include: Duke University (#26), Australian National University (#24)

## Not in QS global rankings include:

The Education University of Hong Kong  
Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts (funded directly by the government)

## Self-Financing Universities

There are 12 degree-granting institutions which are self-financing (meaning they receive no public funding). These institutions tend to be more vocationally focused, and less academically renowned world-wide compared to the publicly-funded institutions. Examples include: Hang Seng Management College, HKCT Institute of Higher Education, The Open University of Hong Kong, VTC (Vocational Training Council) and Yew Chung College of Early Childhood Education, among others.



香港大學

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

## The University of Hong Kong ("HKU") #25 QS Global Ranking; #5 Asian Rankings

HKU has an established reputation as one of the best universities (if not \*the\* best) in Hong Kong. With a wider variety of courses and programs compared to HKUST, HKU's campus is in the center of the city on Hong Kong Island.



\$16-18K annual tuition fees  
for international students



~7K undergraduate students  
~1.5K international undergraduate students  
~1.4K total staff



# Profiles of Top Ranked Universities



## Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ("HKUST")

#37 QS Global Ranking, #3 Asian Rankings



HKUST is world-renowned for its MBA and business degrees. More specialist than other universities in Hong Kong (STEM subjects and business-focused), HKUST has a reputation for cutting-edge facilities and strong graduate job opportunities.



\$16-18K annual tuition fees for international students



~13K undergraduate students  
~3.8K international undergraduate students  
~3K total staff



THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

## The Chinese University of Hong Kong ("ChineseU" or "CUHK")

#49 QS Global Ranking, #10 Asian Rankings

ChineseU has a reputation as a strong local option, with less diversity within their international student population compared to HKU and HKUST. ChineseU has a comprehensive strong academic reputation and some specialist programs that it is particularly known for.



\$18-20K annual tuition fees for international students



~15K undergraduate students  
~4K international undergraduate students  
~2.3K total staff



香港城市大學  
City University of Hong Kong  
專業 創新 胸襟全球  
Professional-Creative  
For The World

## City University of Hong Kong ("CityU")

#55 QS Global Ranking; #8 Asian Rankings

While this university is not in the 'big three' (Hong Kong University, HKUST and Chinese University), for a newer university (established in 1994), CityU is building a strong reputation for its research, and is increasingly competitive with top universities around the world.



\$14-16K annual tuition fees for international students



~7K undergraduate students  
~1.5K international undergraduate students  
~1.4K total staff

## Hong Kong Polytechnic University ("HK PolyU")

#106 QS Global Ranking



HK PolyU is located in Hung Hom, in Kowloon and has built a strong research and teaching reputation, despite not being in the top 3. The largest public university, PolyU is longer established than CityU (for example), it may currently be more recognized by employers. PolyU boasts 20% of all students coming from 30 different countries.



\$14-16K annual tuition fees for international students



~15.5K undergraduate students  
~2K international undergraduate students  
~2.5K total staff

## Colleges or Faculties within a University

Depending on the university, you may apply to a particular college relating to your studies. For example, at CityU, you apply to:

1. College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
2. College of Science and Engineering
3. College of Business
4. School of Creative Media
5. Jockey Club College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences
6. School of Energy and Environment
7. School of Law

To take another example, the University of Hong Kong has (to name just a few), the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Business and Economics, the Faculty of Dentistry and the Faculty of Education.

## Admissions to a Department

Like the system most associated with the US, Hong Kong enables you to apply to a department and then, in some cases, choose a major after the first year of study. This means you can allow yourself a bit of flexibility if you're not completely sure which pathway is right for you.

## Admissions to a Major/ Program or Joint Program

Rather like the traditional UK university system, you can apply directly to a program (or joint program) of study, or choose a major at the point of applying. For example, at CityU, instead of applying to the Department of Economics and Finance, you can apply directly to the Business Economics major.

## Sub Degrees

A 'sub-degree', similar to foundation degrees in the UK, or community college degrees in the US, are also known in Hong Kong as Associate Degrees (AD) or Higher Diplomas (HD). These are lower level than bachelor's degrees, and are intended to prepare students for further studies and initial employment. AD and HD are of equal standing in terms of level, (i.e. Level 4 of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework). They equip students with generic skills, knowledge in specialized disciplines and practical vocation skills.

If Sub Degrees look like a possible fit for you, it's worth considering their benefits:

- They encourage you to develop the ability to learn how to learn (learnability),
- They encourage you to pursue active citizenship.
- They nurture the necessary attitude, knowledge and skills that facilitate you to join the workforce at the para-professional (people who are trained to assist professionals, but do not themselves have a professional license) level.

The main difference between them is that AD puts more emphasis in general education while HD is more vocational. Associate Degrees provide you with a broad knowledge base and a solid foundation of generic skills, while Higher Diplomas enable students to pursue a career in a specific field.





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# Worksheet: Compare Programs & Unis

If you already know what you want to study and have a shortlist of universities or programs you like, you may not have considered how different the courses can be!

	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3
Course name			
Opportunities to study abroad?			
Frequency of seminars/ tutorials?			
Size of seminars/ tutorials?			
Mode of assessment (coursework vs. exams)?			
Frequency of lectures?			
Frequency of practicals?			
Fieldwork assignments?			

# Admissions Criteria



Admissions criteria vary greatly across different institutions and programs. Therefore, we highly recommend that you establish contact with the institutions and programs that interest you to ensure you know exactly what's expected of you.

## Academics

- You will need to have completed secondary/ high school (or be about to!) with predicted grades in an official transcript.
- You're expected to achieve strong grades (Hong Kong being one of the most selective countries in the world in terms of academic grades). An example of this is HKUST for an IB student is: [mid 50% Score Range for 2017 Intake: 36 – 40 \(including bonus points\)](#)

### WARNING

The minimum requirements listed may be low (i.e.: IB 24, or 3 passes in A Levels), but the competition is stiff, so don't be lulled into a false sense of security!

## Language Tests

- If you are applying for a course taught in English and it has not been your medium of instruction, you may need to take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), or equivalent examinations, usually to a standard of TOEFL 550-600 (or 79 internet-based) or IELTS 6 - 6.5.
- You may need to demonstrate evidence of proficiency in another language (this may be required to be Chinese in some cases, but not all).

## Personal Statement

The most competitive universities (University of Hong Kong, HKUST, ChineseU) require a personal statement as part of your application. This gives the faculty assessing your application their most significant impression of you as an individual. This section is the key to distinguish your application from other suitable candidates - to stand out from the crowd of others with exceptional academics! On the next page, we'll go into detail on what the personal statement should include, but remember that you should contact your chosen university to find out what they are looking for, as they may change with time and differ according to the subject you're applying to.

## Referee's Report

This is completed by your high school principal, or a teacher who knows you well. It covers your achievements, interests and personality, and asks the teacher to assess you in terms of analytical skills, language skills (oral, written), initiative and independence of thought, industry and perseverance, reliability and responsibility. It also asks the referee to comment on positions of responsibility held by the applicant, as well as extra-curricular activities participated in (both within and outside of school).

## Additional Requirements

- You will likely be asked to pay an application fee. This is typically ~\$60 (or HK\$450) for up to 3 program choices. You may also be asked to pay for the first year's tuition up front to secure your spot (this is currently the case for ChineseU, costing HK\$10,000).
- You may need to prove your proficiency with a second language (not necessarily Chinese!).
- SAT scores (some universities such as HKUST require this at 1290 or higher), but this isn't required by all universities in Hong Kong.

# The Personal Statement



Every Hong Kong university is different in how they treat the personal statement. In fact, even within a university, the personal statement may be required, optional or not required. Typically, if required, it should be confined to two-page A4 size, but you may not have a specific word or space limit.

## Structure

### Paragraph 1

Make it clear what you're applying to and open with your enthusiasm for the university and faculty.

### Paragraph 2

Introduce your personal interest in the program you're applying for, and establish (with evidence!) your readiness for study and how you believe you will benefit from it.

### Paragraph 3

Describe your academic background and achievements. Highlight evidence of strong academic and personal qualities both from your school and activities you have participated in outside the classroom.

### Paragraph 4

Link your academic experience to any relevant internship, voluntary or work experience. Mention any examples of personal development (i.e. ways in which you have shown resilience and perseverance), and highlight any relevant awards you have won.

## Top Tips

### 1. Make a Personal Roadmap

Make sure the statement 'flows' and tells a clear story of why you're applying, why you're the best fit for the subject, and where you think it's going to take you.

### 2. Be Honest

Don't lie about or exaggerate your achievements - it's likely to be found out, and then you'll be disqualified. It's not worth it!

### 3. Remember Your Audience

The person reading your statement is likely to be an expert in your chosen area of interest. They'll want to know whether you're someone they want to teach, so everything you say should link back to answering that question for them. This means, why you want to study the program and why you believe you're ready for the challenges and demands of university education.

### 4. Check and Check Again

Don't rely on spellcheck - make sure you proof read your work several times before you submit it. A statement with grammar, punctuation or spelling errors can make a negative impression on the admissions person and look careless or unskilled.



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# Lifestyle

## East Meets West

Hong Kong is a diverse, vibrant and multicultural city. You will be able to experience a unique blend of cultures and lifestyles. The Chinese majority forms the core of the local culture, but Hong Kong has a foreign population of about 500,000 from different parts of the world, both students and long term expats. While it's a melting pot of people from all over, the largest countries of origin are Indonesia, the Philippines, the UK, the US, Thailand, India, Japan, Australia, Pakistan and Nepal. You should learn from Cantonese, but you will also be able to navigate the place by speaking in English, and if you have that craving for western food and products, you will always find options. Hong Kong is also extremely easy to explore with its modern network of cheap transport - there's no excuse for not getting to know each corner!



## The City That Never Sleeps... With Something for Everyone

With a population of almost 7 million, Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated places on earth. It can be very busy and fast-paced, but it will also offer you the chance to unplug. Many people don't realise that the majority of Hong Kong's territory is green nature with plenty of serene hiking and sea bathing opportunities. Hong Kong has something for nature lovers, something for foodies, something for arts and theatre people - it's a tissue of mini communities who come together from all over and, with the city being relatively transient, communities are often open and ready to meet new people.

## Let's Go Travel!

Hong Kong can also be seen as the launchpad for Asia - every part of the region is easily accessible through affordable flight options and, in some cases, sleeper trains. It's a wonderful excuse to backpack around South East Asia, explore China and pursue other study-related or extra-curricular interests in new environments.



## Facilities & Services Provided by the University

Most universities in Hong Kong provide comprehensive services for their students. These can range from catering facilities, to sports facilities, to medical facilities and much more. The cost of these services is low (a doctor appointment at your University's clinic can cost as low as HK\$15 (US\$2), including medicine!

Campuses provide also spaces for several student associations and actively promote students' socialization and extra-curricular activities. With little effort, you can easily fill your schedule with interesting social and educational events on campus.

## Accommodation

### On-campus Accommodation

If you want to save money and commute time, on-campus accommodation is the best choice for you. In fact, international undergraduate students are often offered hostel places for at least two years. Unless you opt for a single room, you will be made to share a room with local students or other non-local students of the same gender.

The cost for on-campus accommodation varies from institution to institution and can range from HK\$5,000 to HK\$15,000. As the demand for student hostels is huge, you are advised to arrange your accommodation as early as possible if you plan to live on-campus.

### Off-campus Accommodation

Because there has been a surge in the number of international students in Hong Kong in recent years, many universities are not able to provide accommodation to everyone. If that's you, don't worry! There are alternatives - namely, private rental accommodation. It is, however, rather more expensive (between HKD 8,000 and 15,000 a month depending on the size, location and type of accommodation). To save money you may consider sharing the house with a few roommates. This can be a great way to make friends and ensure you keep a balance between study and socialising!

Finding off-campus accommodation in Hong Kong is not easily done at a distance. You will probably have to physically be in the city for a couple of weeks to find a place. However, there is an up-side! It's usually very quick to move into your apartment (many are available immediately) and the process is simple and relatively painless.

## Cost of Living

Accommodation costs aside, Hong Kong actually has cheaper transportation, telecommunications and public healthcare than many countries in Europe or North America. Also, you can get student discounts for many essentials, or even arts and cultural events. You will find student discounts in some restaurants too!

Hence, studying in Hong Kong does not have to be expensive. Especially if you can get a spot in the student accommodation facilities.

## Health and Safety

Hong Kong is a very safe place, with a very low crime rate. Yet, it is still a very big and busy city and it is not completely foreign to small crimes such as pickpocketing.

If you get sick in Hong Kong, you're in good hands. The city has some of the best healthcare in the world, at a very reasonable price.



## The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government Scholarship Fund

International students seeking to study in Hong Kong could consider the scholarships awarded by the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund. The fund was established to encourage outstanding local and non-local students to pursue their studies at any of the following institutions:

1. The 8 public universities in Hong Kong (including the top 3!)
2. The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA).
3. Vocational Training Council.

The scholarship is HK\$80,000 (approximately US\$10,300) per year for non-local students.

Universities have different budgets for international students, so it's worth doing your research on the ones that are known to have bursaries for international students.

## Scholarship Selection Criteria

When deciding if a student should be awarded the above scholarships, the institutions take into consideration the following:

- (a) excellent performance in academic studies;
- (b) recognized contribution to the institution/society;
- (c) demonstrated leadership and good communication skills; and/or
- (d) strong commitment to the Hong Kong community.

## Other funding opportunities

Ten targeted scholarships offered each year to first-year non-local full-time students from ASEAN countries, India and Korea who are enrolled in publicly-funded degree programmes in Hong Kong. Ten additional scholarships are offered to first-year non-local students from Indonesia and Malaysia starting, respectively, from 2016/17 and 2018/19 for pursuing full-time studies in publicly-funded degree programmes in Hong Kong.

Starting from 2017/18, new scholarships funded by private donations were made available to students from selected countries/regions along the Belt and Road. For enquiries about scholarships for countries of the Belt and Road contact the Education Bureau at [hksbr@edb.gov.hk](mailto:hksbr@edb.gov.hk).

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