

# The true university life

Many students consider attending university to be about more than going to classes and passing examinations – there are other ‘must dos’ to complete the tertiary education experience

**M**ANY Hong Kong students believe university life should comprise five essential elements. Studying is, of course, the core. But also important are dorm life, *seung jong*, doing part-time jobs and dating.

## Dorm life

DORM is short for **dormitory**, which is also called university residence. Dorm life can help you learn things that you would not learn in the classroom, like getting along with others.

Hong Kong’s eight universities all have student residences. Apart from enabling students to gain the experience of living more **independently** away from home, they also save travelling time.

Hong Kong is relatively small and transport is convenient, so it is possible for students to choose to live at home and commute to classes every day.

But many choose to stay in a dormitory for the experience. Louis is a third-year student at Chinese University of Hong Kong’s System Engineering and Engineering Management Department. His home is in Tin Shui Wai, so living in a dormitory certainly makes sense transport-wise. But he also enjoys dorm life.

“Before going to university, I had always longed to live in a dorm as it would be a lot of fun, getting to know a lot of people and spending a lot of time with your friends. This is the third year that I have been living in a dormitory, and everything is just as I had **imagined**,” he says.

Some students might expect dormitories to be places where you



can run free and do whatever you like. But, as Louis points out, student residences are governed by strict rules. And the high degree of freedom comes with responsibility.

## Participating in student bodies

‘**BANKERS**’ are senior members of banks. The word also refers to ‘the person running the table, controlling play, or acting as dealer in some gambling and board games’.

It is also the meaning of the character ‘chong’ in ‘seung jong’ (上莊) in the local university campus lingo. Seung jong means taking part in running student bodies. It is called ‘seung jong’ because it represents the act of ‘taking control’ of student affairs.

Getting involving in organising student activities is a valuable

learning experience. Andy Chan, Polytechnic University student union chairman in 2012-13, says he was hoping to contribute to society by arousing concern among fellow students about social issues.

The job of a student leader is onerous, he says, and you can become **overwhelmed** by the responsibilities and workload. “So you must set up an action framework, and follow it through,” he advises.

## Exchange programmes

WHILE taking part in exchange programmes overseas is not one of the five university life ‘essentials’, it is an opportunity that many students take to broaden their horizons.

Each local university runs a variety of exchange programmes

with education institutions throughout the world – from nearby places like the mainland and Taiwan, to more far away countries in Europe and South America.

Usually, students have to attain a certain grade level to be **eligible**. Billy Lee, a senior at the University of Hong Kong, joined an exchange programme and spent six months in Germany last year.

“It was a very different experience from travelling, as you are staying for a prolonged period of time in a foreign place to immerse yourself in its culture and to exchange experiences with the locals,” he says.

He made many friends there and, in their interaction, he realised that people of different cultures can have very different ways of thinking. 🐢

## Key ideas

University education is structured in such a way that students are given more say in organising their life. It also offers the experience of dormitory living for students to immerse themselves in campus life and to learn independence and other life skills. While these are common qualities of university education, each institution has its own unique characteristics.

## Did you know?

In the 2013/14 academic year, there were 26 institutions offering sub-degree, degree and top-up degree programmes, providing about 44,000 full-time intake places.

## Critical Questions:

1. Should university students just concentrate on their studies?
2. What do you think should be the essential components of university life?

## References:

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## Different university, different characteristics

The eight universities in Hong Kong each have their own unique characters, appearance and personality.

**University of Hong Kong (香港大學):** Hong Kong’s oldest university, whose students have the highest standard of English. It is very famous for its Hall Culture (舍堂文化) which provides students with a rich range of activities.

**Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學):** it has a spacious and scenic campus that sits on a hill overlooking Tolo Harbour. It is the only university that has a ‘college’ system, like the house system of Hogwarts in the Harry Potter stories.

**Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (香港科技大學):** the school’s acronym HKUST has a spoof version, “Hong Kong University of Stress and Tension”, which refers to its career-oriented, heavy course workloads.

**Hong Kong Baptist University (香港浸會大學):** its School of Communication is famous and its journalism department has been rated one of the top 10 for Asian students by Asian Correspondent.

**City University of Hong Kong (香港城市大學):** as it is linked with the Festival Walk (又一城) shopping mall, its name is jokingly blended with that of the mall as ‘yau yat sing si dai hok’ (又一城市大學). Nestling at the foot of Lion Rock Mountain amidst luxury housing, its student dormitories command a breathtaking view of Kowloon, with Victoria Harbour in the distance.

**The Hong Kong Institute of Education (香港教育學院):** emphasising practical experience, its students in the Chinese education and English education streams have the opportunity to go on language immersion programmes outside Hong Kong. Its Jockey Club Student Quarters is the only local university dormitory that **fosters** a ‘family’ experience with 7-person and 10-person flats.

**Lingnan University (嶺南大學):** the school does not offer science or technical programmes and its English, Chinese and philosophy courses enjoy high **acclaim**. It also offers a lot of overseas exchange opportunities for students.

**Hong Kong Polytechnic University (香港理工大學):** it offers many specialised courses, such as optometry and rehabilitation sciences. Its design school is also famous.



## Campus life lexicon – what do they mean?

<b>Freshman</b>	A first-year student.
<b>Wat seh (屈蛇)</b>	Literally a snake in hiding. Means to stay the night at a dorm ‘illegally’. Such an act could bring a penalty.
<b>Yin yeung se (鴛鴦蛇)</b>	A non-resident student of the opposite sex staying overnight at a dorm unit.
<b>Da seh (打蛇)</b>	Supervisors checking on ‘illegals’ in dormitories.
<b>GPA</b>	Grade Point Average – the average grade of all subjects taken, representing the overall academic standing of a student.
<b>Gwo sam bao se (過三燻四)</b>	Having a GPA of over 3 and approaching 4.
<b>Tin dei tong (天地堂)</b>	Having a timetable that consists of very early and very late classes on the same day.
<b>Seung jong (上莊)</b>	To take up executive positions in student bodies.
<b>Jong yau/ Jong yuen (莊友/莊員)</b>	Fellow executives in a student body.
<b>King jong (傾莊)</b>	Students aspiring to take up running a student body in the next term discussing future plans.
<b>Dai o (大O)</b>	A school-organised orientation camp.
<b>Sai o (細O)</b>	Departmental or faculty orientation camps.
<b>Chim (潛)/Jip (接)</b>	‘Invisible’ students – those who are detached and seldom show up for group activities.