

In the first term of 2019-2020 academic year, I was fortunate to have a chance to study at the University of Hong Kong. Hong Kong was going through a special period with ongoing political protests, but the life in the city was still colourful.

Accommodation

Visa application usually happens around April/May. Accommodation and Module application happens in the summer. Most of the accommodation at HKU are twin rooms, with very few single room options. Students need to apply early and pay close attention to the information about interviews at different accommodation halls. Initially I did not get a single room, but I asked to be put on to waitlists of other accommodations and eventually got a single room at Ching Lin Terrace. It was a clean and quiet place between HKU and Kennedy Town, a residential area 15min away from the university with many good local food options. This one is more expensive than the other university halls and a single room cost about 400 pounds a month. Exchange students can also rent on their own and the university provide a subsidy of 1500 HKD per month.

<https://www.cedars.hku.hk/index.php?route=accommodation/information&category=information>

Study

HKU offers a wide range of courses and students can choose outside their discipline freely. Normally 4 or 5 modules are required for each semester. As a Maths student I have chosen two maths modules, one common core on law in modern China (a special range of course offered to all students at HKU) and one art history module. There is a good selection of modules about China. In the first week of the semester, students can register or drop any modules, but changes cannot be made after the period.

As a maths student, my experience was that maths modules at HKU are taught in a similar way as in Warwick. The art history module was relatively easy for native English speakers as the standard for essays at HKU were less strict. Common core modules usually require group work or presentations. Attendance and performance in tutorials are also graded. Most modules have mid-term tests in mid October.

Unfortunately, the University was shut down and exchange students were required to leave Hong Kong in November because of safety concerns. We completed the second half of the semester online and had exams online as well. HKU offered Pass/Fail as a grade option, which is an option for students on G101 (Year abroad does not count for credit).

HKU also offers many sports lessons at a reasonable price, including swimming, yoga, dancing, etc. (<https://cse.hku.hk/phyact.asp?pageid=141>) I have done a butterfly swimming course during my time at HKU.

Exchange student at HKU can also sign up for their mentorship programme (<https://www.mentorship.hku.hk/daao/>). It would be a great experience if I could stay for the full year. They will assign an alumnus as your mentor and you will be able to get to know them and experience local life.

HKU holds many public lectures and career events. These are useful to go to as well and the information will be sent to the HKU email.

Food and things to do

It is recommended to get a student Octopus (transport card) as early as you can, so that you can get 50% off on underground tickets. In order to get the discount, you need to fill in a form and let the university sign it, then return it to the MTR office.

There are lots of food options in HK. The food on campus is cheaper, at about 3-4 pounds per meal. A simple meal at small restaurants usually cost less than 10 pounds. There are a few good dim sum places in Kennedy I often go to. Seafood buffet (Daikiya Japanese Restaurant) is also great for going out with friends.

Although Hong Kong is busy and cramped, it still has a couple of well-preserved nature resort. A weekend camping trip to Sai Kung was an unforgettable experience of my exchange study. The MacLehose Trail is a great hiking route in Sai Kung.

Victoria peak is really close to the university and the view at the top is amazing.

Hong Kong has warm weather until the end of October. Repulse Bay Beach is a great one to visit in a sunny day.

The ferry from Central Pier can take you to the surrounding islands (Lamma, Lantau, Cheng Chau), where you can find quieter fishing villages and hiking trails.

Klook is a good app to have. It gives you discounts on tours and tickets.



It is also very easy to travel from Hong Kong to Mainland China. The city right next to Hong Kong is Shenzhen, as busy and crowded as Hong Kong but with much cheaper food and Karaoke.

Summary

In general, Hong Kong is very interesting place with a wide variety of things to do and food to try. It is very convenient with great public transport and safe even amid the protests. Almost everyone can speak English, so it is easy to get around. I have had a great experience during my short exchange study and made good friends.