We Care * We Support * We Lead

A Smart Guide for Student Adviser
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About AAO
The mission of the Academic Advising Office (AAO) is to provide quality and accessible advisory services to support and enhance the academic success and development of undergraduate students. AAO is staffed with seasoned academic advisers and experienced administrators who are committed to helping students, especially in the first year, to make a smooth transition and develop appropriate study plans.

AAO works closely with Faculties, CEDARS, Halls and Residential Colleges to co-ordinate and implement university-wide academic advising initiatives, adviser professional development, and sharing of best practices. In addition, it provides administrative support to the University Academic Advising Committee, which oversees the overall academic advising strategies for undergraduate students.

About this Guide
This guide is designed to provide a foundation for your role as a student adviser and offer quick references on university-wide academic issues. It supplements resources and training provided by your Faculty, Hall or Residential College.

Feedback
If you have any suggestions about this guide or comments on your experience as a student adviser, please email AAO at aaoffice@hku.hk.

Contact AAO
Address: Room 212, 2/F, Knowles Building, the University of Hong Kong
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Email: aaoffice@hku.hk
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FB: hkuaaao
IG: aao_hku

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The Role of a Student Adviser

This section of the guide explains the concept of peer advising and outlines general advising responsibilities. In addition, you will be provided guidance on how ethical principles are applied to advising.

1 What is academic advising?
Academic advising is a developmental process in which students are provided with support in clarifying their academic, career and life goals, developing plans to achieve these goals, and evaluating their own progress. Academic advising is also a process in which students are empowered to think critically, explore available options, and take personal responsibility for decision-making with the guidance of their teachers and academic advisers.

2 What is peer advising?
Peer advising is centered on the notion of “students helping students” (Ender & Newton, 2000). Most students already turn to fellow students for advice in informal ways. However, a formal peer advising structure can help ensure that accurate academic information is being delivered in a way that students understand and channel appropriate referrals. Peer advising programmes are also notably different from student helper roles. “Peer advisers are students who have been selected and trained to offer academic advising services to their peers” (Koring & Campbell, 2005). Intentionally designed responsibilities towards attainment of academic goals are established.

3 What are the basic responsibilities of a student adviser at HKU?
This list outlines the general responsibilities of student advisers. Your specific duties will be determined by your Hall warden, Master of Residential College or Faculty supervisor.

• To have a basic understanding of the curriculum structure and academic resources at HKU.
• To care about the academic success of fellow students and model this caring attitude when helping others.
• To provide support on the academic transition to the University and share successful study strategies with students.
• To collaborate with your Faculty or Hall to offer student activities of academic interest and assist in centrally organized academic activities.
• To maintain a high level of sensitivity to students of different cultures, needs and academic backgrounds.
• To make effective referrals and direct advisees to other available campus resources and support services as necessary.
4 What are the advantages of being a student adviser?
Peer-to-peer relationships impact students’ growth and typically build a positive association with the university experience. Advantages for peer advisers include: Build recognition around campus, enhance your credibility with your advisees, form relationships with other peer advisers, develop personal leadership skills, enhance communication and interpersonal skills, and obtain additional access to mentors and supervisors. The role further demonstrates your competence and commitment to other members of the campus community.

5 What ethical principles do I need to observe when I advise my peers?
The following points help guide ethical decisions related to academic advising. (Lowenstein, 2008)
• **Enhance learning whenever possible**
  Help your fellow students overcome obstacles and maximize the overall learning experience.
• **Treat students equitably**
  Do not play favourites among your fellow students, nor exert more effort to those you like better or whose values are more compatible with your own.
• **Allow for autonomous decisions**
  This principle is derived from the ideal of respect for persons. Treat your fellow students as rational, autonomous decision-makers.
• **Respect confidentiality**
  Respect your fellow student’s confidentiality when advising and do not share issues discussed with other students. If concerns arise during advising, contact your supervisor or an AAO staff member.
• **Support the institution’s policies and staff**
  By accepting the role as a student adviser, you undertake a commitment to abide by and to respect the regulations of HKU.
• **Maintain the credibility of the advising programme**
  Any behaviour that undercuts credibility runs a risk of harming a student’s educational experience and loss of credibility of the entire student advising programme. You will be trained to impart accurate information and make appropriate referrals, however if you are unsure how to handle a situation, please ask.
Advising Strategies, Resources and Referrals

This section of the guide outlines different advising methods and resources, provides tips on effective communication, and highlights making referrals to other campus units.

6 How and where should I meet my advisees?

The most common advising methods are individual, group, and virtual. The method you use to conduct advising will depend on the goals of your Hall / Residential College or Faculty and needs of your advisees.

- **Individual Advising**
  Individual advising is a one-on-one meeting between the adviser and advisee. Individual advising is ideal for discussing specific academic issues and personalized goals of the advisee.

- **Group Advising**
  Most group advising sessions include a brief presentation and discussion. It is a particularly efficient method for offering general advice, collecting group feedback, and delivering key information to students in similar situations.

- **Virtual Advising**
  Virtual advising allows flexibility to accommodate a variety of situations and in a communication method you and your fellow students are already comfortable in using with one another. Email, instant messaging and other forms of social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) can be utilized to support advising.

7 How can I form supportive relationship with my advisees?

Creating and sustaining open and deep relationships with your advisees is a key component of effective peer leadership and advising. Here are some specific strategies for starting this important relationship-building process.

- If you're helping out in the orientation programme, arrive early to strike up conversations with new students and stick around afterwards to interact with them. The positive first impression will promote future interactions.

- At your first meeting, learn about their backgrounds, interests, experiences and goals. Keep track of what you learned in this initial meeting and build on it to guide your conversations in future meetings.

- Check their preferred mode(s) of communication so as to stay in contact. Use of multiple channels may be useful to reach out to advisees.

- Continue the connection by regularly sending them greetings or new information of interest or relevance to them.
8 How can I communicate effectively with my advisees?

Communication is perhaps your most critical skill as a student adviser. When it comes to effective communication, being a good listener and asking questions are key aspects.

(1) Being a Good Listener

- **Listen with your undivided attention and empathy (rather than focusing on what you want to say next)**
  If a student comes to seek your advice, stop what you’re doing and turn your attention to the advisee. Seek to understand your advisee’s experience without making judgement.

- **Don’t interrupt**
  Take the time to fully listen. When you interrupt, you give the impression that you are not interested in what is being said. Even if you think you have heard this type of academic issue before and know how to handle it, allow your fellow students to finish their explanation and ensure you comprehend their specific situations.

- **Respond verbally and non-verbally**
  When you respond verbally, you might summarize and ask related follow-up questions. Non-verbal gestures include nodding your head, smiling, eye contact, and mirroring the body language of the other person. All these indicate that you are interested in what is being said and in many cases make the person feel more comfortable.

(2) Asking Questions

You are encouraged to adopt a developmental approach to advising. Remember, “advising” is not “giving advice”. When your fellow student approaches you for help, avoid quickly prescribing a solution. Asking open-ended questions can allow time for your fellow student to reflect on their specific situation and help identify possible options.

Common examples include:

- What do you enjoy about being a student at HKU?
- What you want to experience while you are at HKU?
- How would this impact your academic goals?
- How do you balance your studies and activities?
- What other ways can you overcome your shyness?

Don’t just rely on questions from this list — create your own and ask related questions based on the specific situation. A good idea is to ask about something that was brought up in previous conversations, e.g. about joining a society or a difficult assignment.
9 How can I help my advisee adjust to the mode of university learning?
There are numerous common challenges that new students might face in their transition to university learning. Prepare to share with them your study experience and help them master important learning skills:

• How to set goals
• How to manage time
• How to form good study habits
• How to select courses @ SIS?
• How to handle English readings and assignments
• How to acquire university-level study skills e.g. academic reading and writing; collaborative learning, information and digital literacy
• How to become comfortable to interact and seek feedback from teachers
• How to use latest library resources in their studies
• How to connect, develop and create own ideas rather than just listing ideas
• How to avoid committing plagiarism and self-plagiarism

See AAO website for explanation and resources. You can also download our Quick Smart Guide on Studies for some practical tools and tips.

10 How can I help my advisees plan their studies?
AAO has recently developed a new web-based “Academic Roadmap” (http://aaohk.hk/roadmap) to help students navigate their studies year by year. You can refer your advisees to it. This “Roadmap” provides specific information, advice and /or resources on key study matters which are displayed as bus stops along students’ learning journey.
11 **How can my advisees find study requirements if they choose/change a particular Major/Minor?**

You can suggest them to use two new academic planning tools, namely, “Degree Audit” system and its “What-If” function. The report generated by the “Degree Audit” system matches a student’s course enrollment and grades against his/her degree and Major(s)/Minor(s) requirements and provides a useful reference for monitoring academic progress; for the “What If” function, your advisees can make good use of it to set hypothetical changes to their Major(s)/Minor(s) or study programmes and look at the impacts on their study plans and/or progress.

12 **What should I do when advisees have very specific academic questions?**

If your fellow students encounter some specific study issues which you find hard to address, don’t panic. There are multiple campus services and resources that you can refer them to:

- **Faculty Academic Advisers**
  
  Every new student has a Faculty Academic Adviser. If your fellow students have any concerns regarding their studies, encourage them to contact their Faculty Academic Advisers. They can view their advisers in SIS under Self Service>Student Centre>Adviser Section or find the contacts of their Faculty Academic Adviser at: [http://aao.hku.hk/sy3/academic-advising/find-your-academic-adviser/](http://aao.hku.hk/sy3/academic-advising/find-your-academic-adviser/)

- **Temporary Academic Advisers**
  
  If your fellow students need advice on deciding a Major or Minor, please encourage them to request Temporary Academic Advisers, who are current teachers specializing in helping students explore specific discipline options, through SIS. Check out this video to find out more: [http://aao.hku.hk/video/video-03/](http://aao.hku.hk/video/video-03/). For a listing of available Majors or Minors, refer to [http://aao.hku.hk/plan-of-study/major-and-minor/](http://aao.hku.hk/plan-of-study/major-and-minor/).
• **Faculty Offices**
  If your fellow students have questions on policies, regulations or procedures, you can suggest them to contact their Faculty Offices. The contact information can be found at [http://aao.hku.hk/faculty-staff/contacts/](http://aao.hku.hk/faculty-staff/contacts/).

• **Academic Advising Office**
  AAO Academic Advisers can help students with overall University regulations, general academic requirements, development of an academic plan, and academic progress. To contact AAO, please call 3917 0128 or send your email to aaoffice@hku.hk. For further contact details, please look at [http://aao.hku.hk/contact-us/](http://aao.hku.hk/contact-us/).

### What should I do when making referrals?
Advising relies on a partnership between the adviser, advisee, and supporting units across the campus community. Make use of the trust between you and advisee to encourage proactive help-seeking behavior and avoid over-dependency on the peer adviser.

**Before Referral**
- Listen closely to the advisee’s problem before making the referral
- Explain why you are referring him/her rather than trying to help the advisee yourself
- Provide a description of the resource and its purpose

**When Making the Referral**
- Refer student to a person of a particular office if possible
- Deal with student’s worries about the referral
- If needed, help student make an appointment and walk them to the referred person’s office
- If student resists and you are worried, call the Office and get their advice

**After the Referral**
- Follow up with the referred student as the gravity of the matter requires
- When you next meet with the advisee, chat if the issue had been resolved and what your advisee has learned.

### What supporting units on campus are available for referrals?
Familiarize yourself with the campus support network so that you can promptly direct your advisees to the relevant help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units that might provide support</th>
<th>If your peers have issues with --</th>
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</table>
| **Academic Advising Office** | • Academic planning and trajectory of studies  
• General advice on academic performance  
• University requirements |
| ![Email Icon] [http://aao.hku.hk](http://aao.hku.hk)  
![Email Icon] aaoffice@hku.hk  
![Phone Icon] 3917 0128  
![Location Icon] Room 212, 2/F, Knowles Building | |
| Academic Services Office (under Academic Support and Examinations [ASE] Section, Registry) | • Application of exit documents (such as transcripts, testimonials, certificates of graduation)  
• Internal transfer of studies  
• Admission of halls and residential colleges  
• Matters on discontinuation of studies on University Level  
• Academic-related services: dates of semesters, tuition fee, student handbook, student registration (including student cards and student records) |
| --- | --- |
|  [http://www.ase.hku.hk](http://www.ase.hku.hk)  
  asoffice@hku.hk  
  2859 2433  
  G04, G/F, Run Run Shaw Building |  |
| Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS)  
CEDARS, Campus Life Section | • Financial assistance and fee deferment  
• Personal finances and budgeting  
• Accommodation needs  
• Support to student bodies  
• Support for non-local students (integration and visa formalities)  
Mainland students might contact China Affairs Office (Tel: 2241 5886 / [http://www.aal.hku.hk/cao](http://www.aal.hku.hk/cao)) for further assistance. |
|  [http://cedars.hku.hk](http://cedars.hku.hk)  
  cedars@hku.hk  
  2859 2305  
  Rm 301-323, 3/F, Main Building |  |
| CEDARS, Careers and Placement Section | • Career planning resources  
• Career preparation, advice and workshops  
• Job opportunities and internships  
• Recruitment talks and career fairs  
• Graduate employment statistics |
|  [http://cedars.hku.hk](http://cedars.hku.hk)  
  careers@hku.hk  
  2859 2317  
  3/F, Meng Wah Complex |  |
| CEDARS, Counselling and Person Enrichment (CoPE) Section | • Counselling services for students with personal, relationship or emotional issues and mental health concerns  
• Person enrichment workshops (confidence & communication, resilience, stress management and generic study skills)  
• SEN support for students with disabilities or special educational needs  
• Survival Cantonese Courses  
• Peer English Tutoring  
• Inclusion funds |
|  [http://cedars.hku.hk/cope](http://cedars.hku.hk/cope)  
  cedars-cope@hku.hk  
  3917 8388  
  Rm 301-323, 3/F, Main Building |  |
| **CEDARS, Student Development Programmes** | • Educational funds  
• Leadership programmes  
• Community engagement programmes  
• Global citizenship programmes |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| [http://cedars.hku.hk/cope](http://cedars.hku.hk/cope) | ![cedars cope](cedars-cope@hku.hk)  
| ![3917 8388](3917 8388) | ![Rm 301-323, 3/F, Main Building](Rm 301-323, 3/F, Main Building) |

| **Centre for Applied English Studies (CAES)** | • Self-directed English learning opportunities  
• Compulsory credit-bearing English courses  
• Special English courses (e.g. summer programmes, one-off workshops etc.) |
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="http://caes.hku.hk" alt="http://caes.hku.hk" /></td>
<td><img src="http://www2.caes.hku.hk/advisors" alt="http://www2.caes.hku.hk/advisors" /> (CAES for Academic Advisers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ![caes@hku.hk](caes@hku.hk) | ![3917 2004](3917 2004)  
| ![Room 6.60, Run Run Shaw Tower](Room 6.60, Run Run Shaw Tower) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Common Core Office</strong></th>
<th>• Common core curriculum</th>
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<td><img src="http://commoncore.hku.hk" alt="http://commoncore.hku.hk" /></td>
<td><img src="commoncore@hku.hk" alt="commoncore@hku.hk" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>![2219 4957](2219 4957)</td>
<td>![Room 136, Main Building](Room 136, Main Building)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Examinations Office** | • Examination regulations  
• Examination timetable |
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="http://www.exam.hku.hk" alt="http://www.exam.hku.hk" /></td>
<td><img src="exam@hku.hk" alt="exam@hku.hk" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![2859 2439 / 2859 2434](2859 2439 / 2859 2434)</td>
<td>![Room 1026,10/F, Knowles Building](Room 1026,10/F, Knowles Building)</td>
</tr>
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| **Finance and Enterprise Office (Student Unit)** | • Settlement of fees/charges  
• Student account enquiry  
• Payment of scholarships, prizes and bursaries |
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<td><img src="http://www.feo.hku.hk/finance" alt="http://www.feo.hku.hk/finance" /></td>
<td><img src="student@fo.hku.hk" alt="student@fo.hku.hk" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>![2859 2337](2859 2337)</td>
<td>![1/F, Knowles Building](1/F, Knowles Building)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Graduate School</strong></th>
<th>• MPhil and PhD programmes</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="http://www.gradsch.hku.hk" alt="http://www.gradsch.hku.hk" /></td>
<td><img src="gradsch@hku.hk" alt="gradsch@hku.hk" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![2857 3470](2857 3470)</td>
<td>![Room P403, Graduate House](Room P403, Graduate House)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horizons Office</strong></td>
<td>• Information of a vast range of Mainland and international (ML/INT) learning opportunities for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://tl.hku.hk/horizons/">http://tl.hku.hk/horizons/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:horizons@hku.hk">horizons@hku.hk</a></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2857 8539</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rm 136, 1/F, Main Building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **International Affairs Office** | • Exchange Programmes
• Worldwide Plus Visiting Programmes
• Short-term Programmes |
| http://www.aal.hku.hk/studyabroad/ |  |
| goabroad@hku.hk |  |
| 2219 4549 |  |
| Global Lounge, G/F, Fong Shu Chuen Amenities Centre |  |
| **Libraries** | • Library collections, resources and databases
• Learning and research support |
| https://lib.hku.hk/ |  |
| libis@hku.hk |  |
| 3917 2203 |  |
| Location of Different Libraries: https://lib.hku.hk/general/location/index.html |  |
| **Scholarships Office** | • Scholarship openings, eligibility and application deadlines |
| http://www.scholarships.hku.hk/ |  |
| scholarships@hku.hk |  |
| 2219 4422 |  |
| 9/F, Knowles Building |  |
| **School of Chinese** | • Chinese language courses
• Chinese language enhancement programmes
• Chinese language courses (Cantonese and Putonghua) for international undergraduate students |
| http://www.hku.hk/chinese |  |
| Chinese@hku.hk |  |
| 3917 1199 (General) |  |
| 3917 2048 (Chinese Language Centre) |  |
| 3917 8476 (Chinese Language Enhancement Programme) |  |
| Room 801, Run Run Shaw Tower |  |
| **ITS Service Desk** | • Technical issues regarding the SIS |
| http://www.its.hku.hk/service-desk |  |
| AskSIS@hku.hk |  |
| 3917 0123 |  |
| Faculty Offices (For general administrative support regarding student study) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Architecture                    | faculty@arch.hku.hk | 2859 2149       | 4/F, Knowles Building |
|                                  |                  |                |                 |
| Arts                            | arts@hku.hk      | 3917 8977      | Room 4.05, 4/F, Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus |
|                                  |                  |                |                 |
| Business and Economics          | fbe.undergrad@hku.hk | 3917 5343      | Room 401, 4/F, K. K. Leung Building |
|                                  |                  |                |                 |
| Dentistry                       | dental@hku.hk    | 2859 0390      | Prince Philip Dental Hospital, 34 Hospital Road, Sai Ying Pun |
|                                  |                  |                |                 |
| Education                       | edfac@hku.hk     | 3917 6044      | Room 420, 4/F, Meng Wah Complex |
|                                  |                  |                |                 |
| Engineering                     | enggfac@hku.hk   | 3917 2803      | Room 501, Haking Wong Building |
|                                  |                  |                |                 |
| Law                             | lawfac@hku.hk    | 3917 2951      | 10/F, Cheng Yu Tung Tower, Centennial Campus |
|                                  |                  |                |                 |
| Medicine                        | medfac@hku.hk    | 3917 9346      | 2/F, Faculty Office, William MW Mong Block, 21 Sassoon Road |
|                                  |                  |                |                 |
| Science                         | science@hku.hk   | 3917 2683      | G/F, Chong Yuet Ming Physics Building |
|                                  |                  |                |                 |
| Social Sciences                 | socsc@hku.hk     | 3917 1234      | 11/F, The Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus |
|                                  |                  |                |                 |
Key Information about the Curriculum at HKU

This section of the guide provides the details of the undergraduate curriculum structure.

15 What is the structure of the undergraduate curriculum?

The HKU curriculum adopts an enabling structure. The main components and credits requirement are summarized in the following tables:

4-Year Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Number of Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory Courses</td>
<td>Common Core³</td>
<td>36 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English¹</td>
<td>6-12 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese¹</td>
<td>6 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialization</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>72-144 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>36-48 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>Electives for all students</td>
<td>Remainder to complete 240 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Required Credits²</td>
<td></td>
<td>240 credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Putonghua-speaking students of the 4-year curriculum should take CUND9002 “Practical Chinese and Hong Kong Society” or CUND9003 “Cantonese for Non-Cantonese Speaking Students”. Students who have not studied Chinese language during their secondary education / who have not attained the requisite level of competence in the Chinese language to take the curriculum-specific Chinese language enhancement course can apply (i) to take credit-bearing Cantonese or Putonghua language courses offered by the School of Chinese especially for international and exchange students (as listed at http://www.chinese.hku.hk/main/undergraduate/chinese-courses-for-international-graduate-students/); OR (ii) to be exempted from the Chinese language requirement and take an elective course in lieu.

² Students are allowed to take additional credits up to 6 credits per semester, or 12 credits per academic year, including the summer semester.

³ Students registered for double degree studies are required to successfully complete 24 credits of courses in the Common Core Curriculum within the curriculum of the first degree, as appropriate. However if they opt out of the double degree to focus on one degree only, they will need to make up the 12 credits of Common Core courses.

⁴ For Core University English, students with level 5 or above in HKDSE English, or non-JUPAS students with equivalent qualification, can choose whether or not to take CAES1000. If they wish to take it, just enroll for it in SIS, no prior application is needed; if they do not wish to take it, a free elective course in lieu is needed. SIS Office will, by around Aug 30,
automatically assign a CAES1000 class to those who need to take it but have not enrolled for it yet and those who have attempted to enroll for it but have not been successful yet.

For the English in the Discipline (ED) requirement, (i) students who have passed the ED courses for a Major but subsequently change that Major are required to pass the ED course for the new Major, or either of the double Majors finally declared upon graduation irrespective of whether the second Major is offered within or outside of the candidates’ home Faculty; (ii) students declaring double Majors can, if they fail in the ED course for one of the Majors, either (a) re-take and successfully complete that failed ED course, or (b) successfully complete the ED course for the other Major, irrespective of whether the Major is offered within or outside of the students’ home Faculty; (iii) students who undertake studies in double Majors or double degrees are not required to take a second ED course but may be advised by the Faculty to do so.

16 In which year of study are the different components typically taken?
This picture shows the distribution of the major components in the Curriculum, demonstrating how studies should progress. There may be variations in some curricula including determination of which components are non-compulsory (e.g., international experience). Student Advisers can also suggest their peers to use AAO’s Academic Planning Sheet to plan ahead for their studies and other learning experiences.
17 What are the common learning experiences of the curriculum?

(1) Common Core

- Designed to provide key common learning experience for all HKU students and to broaden their horizons beyond their chosen disciplinary fields of study.
- Includes four Areas of Inquiry (AoS), in which the students of most curriculums* are required to take 36 credits of Common Core courses with at least one course from each of four AoIs. These AoIs are: Scientific and Technological Literacy, Humanities, Global Issues and China: Culture, State and Society.
- Recently offers two thematic clusters, ‘Sustaining Cities, Cultures, and the Earth’ and ‘The Universe and the Question of Meaning’. Four Common Core courses form a cluster and six common core courses form a Transdisciplinary Minor, all drawn from the same thematic cluster.
- Common Core requirements are mandatory for all undergraduate students to fulfill before graduation, both the Clusters and Transdisciplinary Minors are optional.
- For further information and course formats, please look at the website of Common Core at http://commoncore.hku.hk/.

(* For some double degree students and MBBS students, they are required to complete 4 Common Core courses only. For details, please check with your Faculty.)

(2) Capstone Experience and URFP

- As an integration of knowledge in senior years of study, capstone may take the forms of undergraduate research, field work projects, internship and so on, and is an integral part of the Major programme or the “professional core” for professional curricula. It carries a minimum of 6 credits and is a graduation requirement.
- Students with strong interest in research may enroll in Undergraduate Research Fellowship Programme in their final year or earlier if high potential is demonstrated. Those performed well may gain early admission to Research PG programmes at the University.
- For further information, please look at: http://tl.hku.hk/staff/capstone-experience- and- urfp/

(3) Experiential Learning

- Requires students to tackle real-life issues and problems by drawing on theoretical knowledge that they have learnt in the formal curriculum.
- Forms of experiential learning (EL) include service learning, practicum, and internship.
- The Gallant Ho Experimental Learning Centre (http://ghelc.hku.hk/) is responsible for facilitating and promoting experiential learning at the University.
- For further information and EL at 10 Faculties, please look at: http://tl.hku.hk/reform/experiential-learning/
(4) **Overseas Experience**

The University commits to provide opportunities and support for students to undertake one international and one Mainland learning activity during their studies. These activities are broadly categorized as

- Exchange/Visiting;
- Short-term Study/Study Trip;
- Practical Experience;
- Service Experience;
- Research Internship;
- Student-initiated ML/INT Learning Activities.

Your advisees may refer to the HKU Horizons website ([http://tl.hku.hk/horizons](http://tl.hku.hk/horizons)) for more information.

18 **What are the study load requirements?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-Year Curriculum</th>
<th>Normative Period of Study</th>
<th>Maximum Period of Registration*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Normative Study Load**

|                   | 240 credits (60x 4)       | 360 credits (60x 6)             |
|                   |                           |                                 |
| **Maximum Study Load (credits x years)** | 288 credits (72 x 4) | 432 credits (72 x 6) |

*Maximum period of registration for individual degrees is specified in the curriculum regulations.

19 **Can students take courses that are not offered by their home Faculties?**

One important aim of the enabling curriculum is to “open up” the non-home Faculty curricula to all students. To facilitate students taking non-home Faculty courses, the following principles have been adopted:

- Except for courses belonging to the “professional core” of professional curricula, all compulsory and elective courses in Major programmes of curricula that are offered as a second Major or Minor should be made available to all students to enable them to declare a Major or Minor, if they so choose.
- Some courses in the “professional core” may also be open to students of all Faculties.
- Students enrolled in “professional curricula” can also take courses offered by other Faculties as electives, a Minor or even a Major, within the credit limits specified by the University.
Note: Students are expected to meet pre-requisite requirements of courses, and no timetable clashes for courses are permitted.

20 How can a student learn more about a study programme and its courses and assessment?
Every undergraduate curriculum and Major/Minor programme has provided a Credit Unit Statement for First Degree Curricula defining the requirements (in terms of learning modes, study hours, contact hours, output requirements, etc.) of its standard 6-credit courses, the types of courses offered and the modes of assessment which students will find useful during programme/course selection. Information of specific courses can be found in Faculty / Department websites or the programme guides in SIS.

21 How is GPA calculated?
‘Grade Point Average’ is a numerical measure of a candidate’s academic achievement over a specified period of time, and is calculated by the total of the product of grade points earned for each course attempted (including failed courses) and its credit value being divided by the total number of credits attempted. For the exact GPA calculation formula, please see http://aao.hku.hk/glossary/ under the term “Grade Point Average”. Although official GPA calculations are displayed in a student’s SIS account, advisees can plan ahead with the GPA calculator at http://aao.hku.hk/sy3/plan-of-study/cgpa-calculator/.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>GP Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
22 How is honours classification determined?
Honours classification shall be awarded in five divisions: First Class Honours, Second Class Honours Division One, Second Class Honours Division Two, Third Class Honours, and Pass. As approved by Senate, the classification of honours of students admitted in 2012-13 shall be determined by the Board of Examiners for the degree in accordance with the following Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) scores, with all courses taken (including failed courses) carrying equal weighting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of honours</th>
<th>CGPA range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Class Honours</td>
<td>3.60–4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Class Honours</td>
<td>(2.40–3.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division One</td>
<td>3.00–3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division Two</td>
<td>2.40–2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Class Honours</td>
<td>1.70–2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>1.00–1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23 Where can I find more information about academic policies and the curriculum structure?
- General Regulations, and Regulations for First Degree Curricula; and
- Undergraduate Degree Regulations and Syllabuses http://aaohku.hk/faculty-staff/cur-reg-date/syllabus/
- Available Majors and Minors http://aaohku.hk/faculty-staff/cur-reg-date/major-minor/

Appendix: Structure of the Academic Advising System at HKU
This section paints an overview of how the academic advising system is structured at HKU. After reading this section, you will understand how academic advising is defined at HKU and be able to distinguish various components of the academic advising network and the roles of different academic advisers.

(i) How is the HKU academic advising system structured?
At HKU, the Academic Advising Committee oversees undergraduate academic advising strategies and initiatives across the University. Advising services is made available to undergraduate students via four channels: Faculty-based academic advising, central academic advising (AAO), residence-based academic advising and web-based academic advising. CEDARS also plays a part in the system through advising students on non-academic aspects which impact on studies. Inter-referrals among the units are common to form a comprehensive University advising network.
## (ii) What are the different roles of academic advisers in the University?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Overview of Academic Advising Role</th>
<th>Targeted Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Faculty Academic Advisers**          | • Current professors and teachers in Faculty  
• Principal academic adviser of students  
• Advise on Faculty and all study-related matters  
• Focus attention on academic planning for first-year students  
• Make appropriate referrals as necessary                                                                 | Undergraduate students as assigned by Faculty                                                            |
| **Major Programme and Professional Programme Advisers** | • Current professors and teachers in Faculty  
• Advise on specific academic matters for the programme represented                                                                 | Undergraduate students enrolled in Programme                                                            |
| **Faculty Administrators**              | • Professional administrative staff  
• Explain policy, regulations and procedures of Faculty                                                                 | Undergraduate students enrolled in courses within Faculty                                               |
| **Faculty Temporary Academic Advisers** | • Current teachers in Faculty  
• Advise on academic matters for the Faculty  
• Specialized on helping students exploring Major/Minor and questions for a particular subject area | All undergraduate students upon request in SIS                                                            |
| **AAO Academic Advisers**              | • Professional administrative staff  
• Advise on overall University regulations, general academic requirements, development of study plan, and academic progress  
• Advise on issues that involve more than one Faculty/unit and liaise between different units                                                 | All undergraduate students                                                                                     |
| **Faculty Student Advisers**           | • Students in second year or above with good academic standing selected/nominated by Faculty  
• Sharing study experience and provide general support to peers  
• Direct peers to appropriate units on campus                                                                 | Fellow students studying in the same Faculty (Assigned or open system). Supervision by the Faculty Academic Advising Co-ordinator |
| **Residential Student Advisers**       | • Students in second year or above with good academic standing and active performance in hall life selected by Hall Wardens/College Masters  
• Advice on academic matters and hall life, support academic activities in halls  
• Direct peers to appropriate units on campus                                                                 | Fellow students living in Halls. Specific arrangements determined by Hall Wardens and CEDARS.            |
FAQ

Some common questions your fellow students might ask about your studies are listed at [http://aao.hku.hk/faq/](http://aao.hku.hk/faq/). You may also refer to the videos on academic success at [http://wp.cedars.hku.hk/web/faqvideos/](http://wp.cedars.hku.hk/web/faqvideos/).

For other questions, please refer to your Faculty Office, Warden or Master.

Useful Online Materials

Academic Planning Sheet

Useful Links

References


