Hong Kong
UCEAP Advising Notes

Objective

This document is an advising tool written by a Berkeley Study Abroad advisor to review program specific details that may impact a student’s decision to apply for an UCEAP program. The document is **not** a summary of eligibility requirements, academic, housing, application and other logistical details freely available to students on the UCEAP and BSA website. The best source of detailed program information are the [UCEAP webpages for Hong Kong](https://www.berkeley.edu/studyabroad/). If any concerns you have are not addressed on the UCEAP website or this Advising Notes document, please contact the [BSA Advisor](https://www.berkeley.edu/studyabroad/) for this program.

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COVID-19 Information

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present challenges related to health concerns and international travel. UCEAP has been updating their website's Coronavirus Notice with up-to-date information on program cancellations for the 2021-2022 cycle. Please note that certain programs listed in this Advising Notes document have been canceled or have been moved to a fully online format for the 2021-2022 cycle. All other programs listed are scheduled to proceed at this time, and UCEAP will inform campus offices if there are any updates.

The programs that have been cancelled are:
Hong Kong Summer, HKUST (Summer 2021)

The programs that have been moved to a fully online format are:
Hong Kong Summer, CUHK (Summer 2021)
Research in Hong Kong (Summer 2021)

Last updated February 1, 2021.

Quick Links

Below is a summary of ’21-’22 UCEAP Hong Kong programs available to Berkeley students:

Immersion
Chinese University of Hong Kong (Fall, Spring, Year)
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Fall, Year)
University of Hong Kong (Fall, Spring, Year)

International
Hong Kong Summer, CUHK (Summer Online)

Research
Research in Hong Kong (Summer Online)
What UCEAP Alumni Say About Studying Abroad in Hong Kong

Check out these blog posts and videos to get a feel of life in Hong Kong:

Blog: Top 5 Reasons to Study Abroad in Hong Kong
Blog: Highlighting tips and cultural events from studying abroad in Hong Kong
Video: UCEAP Hong Kong (Site Visit)
Video: HKUST Lipdub 2014

Citizenship and Passport Considerations

For all UCEAP Hong Kong programs, students cannot be accepted to a host university without a valid passport at the time of application to the program. Your UCEAP application will state how long your passport must be valid after the end date of the program. U.S. permanent residence and a green card are not sufficient documentation for admittance to a university in Hong Kong, and they do not substitute for a passport. If you do not have a passport or need a renewal, please review the Passport Information section of the COVID-19 Information for Berkeley Study Abroad Students page, and take action immediately.

Students who were born in Hong Kong and who still hold a valid Hong Kong Permanent Residence Identity Card (HKID) are eligible for admittance and will not need to apply for a visa to study in Hong Kong.

Students who are neither U.S. nor Hong Kong citizens should contact the nearest Chinese Consulate to determine their student visa requirements.

Students who are in the process of applying for U.S. citizenship or making any legal name changes are not eligible to apply unless the changes will be completed before application to the UCEAP program. There are no exceptions to this.

Due to Hong Kong Immigration policy, nationals from Afghanistan, Cuba, Laos, Korea (Democratic People's Republic of), Nepal, and Vietnam are not allowed to study abroad in Hong Kong. There are no exceptions to this.

When booking your flight, keep in mind that your student visa may not arrive until shortly before the start of the program. You are advised not to travel until you have received your student visa.
Financial Considerations

Semester and year UCEAP programs in Hong Kong often cost **less** than a semester or year at UC Berkeley (including the airfare to/from Hong Kong!), so they are highly recommended for students on a tight budget. However, students receiving financial aid need to be aware that financial aid while on UCEAP is based on the cost of the UCEAP program rather than the cost of attendance at Berkeley. Contact a financial aid counselor with any questions about study abroad and financial aid at travelaid@berkeley.edu.

Transfer Student Advisory

Transfer students who do not have a UC GPA at time of application are eligible to apply for all UCEAP programs in Hong Kong **except for** semester and year-long programs at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and University of Hong Kong. For these two programs, Transfer GPAs cannot be considered for admission.

Additionally, for HKUST, transfer students applying for the HKUST Business program must have completed at least one year at UC Berkeley by time of completing the host university application.

Impacted Programs

In some academic years, we receive more applications for Fall & Year terms of the Hong Kong University program than allotted Berkeley spots on the program. Students should not be discouraged from applying to their first choice; however, all applicants are encouraged to consider all three of the excellent Hong Kong partner universities offered through UCEAP. If HKU applicants cannot be accommodated at HKU, the BSA Adviser will help to identify a suitable alternative.

The selection criteria we will use for this program include:

- GPA
- Class Standing
- Statement of Purpose: priority will be given to students who successfully convey why HKU in particular is a good fit for them and how the program will benefit them academically, professionally, and/or personally.
- Completeness and thoroughness of application. Incomplete applications without sufficient reason could be denied immediately.
Chinese Language Considerations

There is no language requirement for UCEAP Hong Kong programs because the majority of courses taken by students at CUHK, HKU, and HKUST are offered in English. However, Cantonese is the language used in dormitories by local students and in the wider Hong Kong community, so some basic knowledge of Cantonese will facilitate interactions both in classes and in everyday activities.

Chinese language study is not a focus at HKU and HKUST, though limited language courses are available.

Students with a strong interest in Chinese language study should apply to CUHK, and they will take a placement test upon arrival in Hong Kong. Students at CUHK can take a maximum of 6 CUHK units (which is the equivalent of 6 UC Berkeley semester units) of Cantonese or Putonghua language study.

Students with advanced Chinese skills (usually three years or more at the university-level or the equivalent proficiency) may take regular CUHK coursework taught in either Putonghua or Cantonese.

Academic Considerations

Hong Kong universities recently completed a transition from 3 to 4 year undergraduate degree programs. Improvements are expected in housing access, class size and academic calendars, but there may still be issues with class availability due to continued prioritization for local students in a major.

Program Considerations: HKU

HKU is modeled after the British structure of higher education, offering a full curriculum of coursework taught English. After being nominated for this program, students submit host university paperwork listing the courses they would like to take at HKU. Students are then admitted into a specific faculty (department) at HKU and are required to take at least 60% of their courses (usually 3 of 5 courses) in the faculty to which they are admitted.

Please note the following faculty restrictions at HKU:

Architecture: The Architecture faculty at HKU admits very few exchange students. Students applying to Architecture should have completed at least 1.5 years of relevant studies before applying. In addition to the standard application documents, applicants to Architecture will need to submit a portfolio in Architecture Design. Only single semester (NOT full year) exchange students will be considered.
Economics/Business/Commerce: Courses offered by the Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE) are highly competitive. You must be a declared Business major to take business courses, and you must be a declared Economics major to take Economics courses. Students should have already completed the course prerequisites before they request to take a course. Co-registration (e.g., taking Microeconomics I and II together in the same semester) is not allowed. Students who do not have a strong background do not typically perform well in these courses. Strong math skills and some background on Chinese or Hong Kong economy are important for success in Business and Economics courses. Students who are in their final year, in particular, should be warned that course enrollment is NOT guaranteed.

Law: Students who apply to the Law Faculty must be majoring in Legal Studies at UC Berkeley.

Grading at HKU reflects the university’s rigorous academic standards. If you apply yourself and adapt to HKU practices and expectations, you can earn good grades.

Program Considerations: HKUST

HKUST programs are not appropriate for students who want to start a new major or study outside of declared their major. HKUST applicants are accepted to a specific school within HKUST (Business, Engineering, Science, Humanities, or Social Sciences), and they are expected to take the majority of their courses from that school. Students interested in the HKUST Business program must be advanced undergraduates with a strong background in economics, management, or business administration, as well as mathematics. All other students are expected to complete some advanced coursework in their area of study prior to departure for UCEAP.

Program Considerations: CUHK

Due to high demand, CUHK prefers that enrollment in Business and Economics courses be limited to students in Business and Economics related majors. Non-majors are not prevented from taking courses at CUHK; however, students who do not have a strong background do not typically perform well in these courses. Strong math skills and some background on Chinese or Hong Kong economy are important for success in Business and Economics courses.

Students live with UC and international students in a foreign student dorm next to the Peking University campus; students may apply for a homestay with a local Chinese family with approval from the UC Study Center.
Internships

In recent years, internships have not possible for exchange students in Hong Kong due to immigration policy. UCEAP is discussing this policy with Hong Kong host universities to determine if internships may be possible in the future.

Considerations for LGBTIQA+ Students

Hong Kong is included as part of China on UCEAP’s list of destinations where extra caution is advised for LGBTIQA+ students. This list includes locations where (1) the rights LGBTIQA+ of persons are less definitive or (2) there are restrictions on the freedom of expression and association of LGBTIQA+ individuals. As in many countries, tolerance levels vary by region; major cities may be more accepting of the LGBTIQA+ community than rural areas. You can review the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 from the U.S. Department of State for more information.

No laws criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity in Hong Kong. While the SAR has laws that ban discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, and family status, no law prohibits companies from discriminating on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. The government claimed public education and existing civil and criminal laws were sufficient to protect the rights of the LGBTIQA+ community and that legislation was not necessary. No additional legislative mechanisms existed to aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTIQA+ community.

Considerations for Graduating Seniors

If you are a graduating senior who is applying to the Spring package programs in Hong Kong, please be advised that the finals period at these universities (especially HKU and HKUST) often stretches to the end of May. Returning to Berkeley to walk in a commencement ceremony is an unrealistic expectation for HKU and HKUST Spring participants. A final exam schedule is often not released until mid-semester of the current academic term, so it’s not possible to choose courses based on the final exam date in order to make it back for graduation. If walking in graduation is very important to you, we recommend that you apply to the National University Singapore, as there is a better chance that program will end before commencement. As an alternative to walking in a Spring ceremony, there is also a UC Berkeley "December Graduates Convocation" if you would like to have the experience of walking in graduation (not department specific). Similarly, you can wait and walk in the following Spring departmental ceremony.
Graduating seniors participating on a spring semester program should ensure that they are on the Spring degree list. If you are not yet on this degree list, you should contact your UC Berkeley College Adviser to petition to moving your expected graduation term. However, spring program grades are often not reported to UCEAP until mid-August, or even September, so your grades will not arrive in time for your degree to be processed with the spring degree list (which occurs in mid-July). You will be automatically removed from the spring degree list and placed onto the summer degree list, which is processed in October. Thus, your diploma would display a summer graduation date rather than a spring graduation date. This policy is subject to change. For all students, after your UCEAP grades arrive and you are waiting for the next degree list to be processed, you can request a "Certificate of Completion" from the Berkeley Registrar that can serve as "proof" of graduation.

Diversity Abroad Resources

BSA recognizes that there are many nuances to exploring your identities abroad, and these articles may not be representative of all identities and experiences. Diversity Abroad's resources, however, are a great starting place for your exploration. You can find a variety of articles to help you prepare for your study abroad experience.