Transforming Student Learning
- 4-year UG curriculum reform at HKU

C9+ 1 Inaugural Symposium on Undergraduate Curriculum Reform
20-22 October 2010
The University of Hong Kong

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Curriculum Reform at HKU: Backdrop

- Education re-structuring in HK 2012 -
  - secondary education: 6 years, new curriculum for S4-S6, new exam system: SRA
  - undergraduate education: 4 years

- UG education
  - professional and non-professional programmes
  - No. of FYFD places are allocated by UGC, some are specifically allocated for manpower planning, eg. Medicine, Nursing, Education, Law
  - Non-local student (incl. mainland China) quota capped at 10% → 20%

- UGC (Govt) funding:
  - UG heavily subsidized by govt
  - 90% TPG self-funded

- Medium of instruction in schools: mix of EMI and CMI
Challenges and Paradoxes in Higher Education

• Great demand for HE, yet employers and tax payers are increasingly dissatisfied with university graduates.

• Employers demand generic capabilities, yet they expect graduates to be able to function fully with little training.

• Students are more vocationally focused, yet they change career paths earlier and more often than before.

• International competition for academically able students is keener than ever before, yet reputation of universities is based on international ranking, which has more to do with research performance than quality of teaching.

• Values and ethics is a missing piece in undergraduate curriculum, yet the core values of a democratic society are critical to sustainable development.
HKU Educational Aims

To enable students to develop capabilities in

• the pursuit of academic/professional excellence, critical intellectual inquiry and life-long learning
• tackling novel situations and ill-defined problems
• enacting personal and professional ethics, self-reflection and greater understanding of others
• intercultural understanding and global citizenship
• communication and collaboration
• leadership and advocacy for the improvement of the human condition
How do we achieve these educational aims?
Conventional Conception of Learning

Classroom Learning (Formal curriculum)
- Systematic
- Organized
- Explicit
- Decontextualized
- Assessed

Extra-/Co-curricular activities (Informal curriculum)
- Non-systematic
- Incidental
- Tacit
- Contextualized and situated
- Not assessed
Learning in Participation

Curriculum = Total learning experience

Classroom Learning

Extra / Co-curricular Learning
Key Features of New Curriculum
Common Learning Experiences

1. Flexibility and student choice; balance between formal and informal curricula: Enabling structure and credit unit system

2. English as medium of learning and lingua franca on campus: Language requirements and provision, and intercultural communication and understanding

3. Common Core Curriculum

4. Clear learning goals and standards for achievement: Outcome-based student learning and assessment

5. Induction to university learning: First year experience and academic induction
1. Flexible Curriculum Structure & Curriculum Space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component (% of total no. of credits)</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>No. of credits*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required for all students (22.5%)</td>
<td>Common Core</td>
<td>36 credits (15% )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>12 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>6 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialization (30% - 40%)</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>72-96 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15% - 20%)</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>36-48 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives (17.5% - 32.5%)</td>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>Standard: 6-credits; 3 or other multiples of 3 with justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of <strong>required</strong> credits</td>
<td>60 credits per year</td>
<td>240 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum</strong> no. of credits</td>
<td>72 credits per year</td>
<td>288 credits</td>
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*6 credits = 120 - 180 student workload hours*
Student and Staff Profile at HKU

Total no. of students: 12,000 UG; 9700 PG
Non-local students: over 6,500 fr 72 countries
- Mainland China: 2500
- International students: 4,000
- Exchange students: 850 fr 180 universities

Academic Staff: over 800
- International: 40% fr 35 countries
Intercultural communication and understanding

• English as a lingua franca on campus: English / bilingual publicity materials, increase proportion of student activities in English
• IS and LS buddy system
• Global Lounge
• Mix of LS, MS and IS in halls of residence
• 8 levels of Putonghua course for IS
• Provision of Halal food in student canteen, place of worship for Muslim students
• Etc.
Global Lounge
“The student who can begin early in life to think of things as connected … has begun the life of learning.” (Mark van Doren, 1943, p. 115)

Aim: To help students to see the interconnectedness and the interdependent nature of human existence through exploring some common human experiences:

- Aesthetic expression of ideas and emotions
- Relationship between individual & community, and the role of former in the latter
- Interactions amongst communities
- Relationship between human beings and nature, and the interdependence of nature
- Beliefs and values essential to human bonding
- Relationship between past, present and future
HKU Common Core

Goals
To enable students to
(a) have a **broader perspective** and a **critical understanding** of the complexities and interconnectedness of the problems and issues that they are confronted with **in their everyday lives**;
(b) have a deeper understanding of their own cultures and other cultures, and to appreciate the interrelatedness and diversity among cultures;
(c) see themselves as **members of local as well as global communities** and to play an active role as responsible individuals and citizens in these communities;
(d) develop the **critical intellectual capabilities** that will be further enhanced in their disciplinary studies.
Themes:
- The creative arts
- Historical awareness: past and present
- Language, communication and society
- Mind-body-spirit
- Ethics and society

Common Human Experiences

Themes:
- Chinese culture
- Chinese civilization
- China's changing environment
- China's quest for modernization
- The rise of China in the 21st century

Global Issues

Themes:
- Global issues, local lives
- Challenges of global governance
- Globalization and economic development
- Global ethics and citizenship

Scientific & Technological Literacy

Themes:
- The nature and methods of science
- Science, technology and society
- Science, technology and global issues
- Science and technology in everyday life
- Frontiers of science and technology

China: Culture, State & Society
Common Core Curriculum: Faculty share of teaching (2010-11 to 2012-13)

- Social Science: 24.2%
- Arts: 25.2%
- Science: 13.6%
- Medicine: 8.6%
- Engineering: 5.8%
- Education: 7.2%
- Law: 1.5%
- Architecture: 8.8%
- Business & Economics: 4.7%
- Dentistry: 0.3%
Feeding the World (2009 Pilot CC Course)

Course Description

One billion people go hungry every day and there is deep pessimism about long-term food supplies because of growing populations, competition for water supplies and concern about energy prices. This course looks in-depth at key issues such as the Green Revolution, meat production, food subsidies, genetically-modified crops, biofuels and the special problem of China (the world’s biggest producer and consumer of food). Students will develop a strong integrated technical, economic and political understanding of the global food supply crisis. They will be equipped to understand and appreciate media reports related to this issue in their lives as informed and influential citizens.
“I want students to think about where what they eat comes from and the human and environmental consequences of producing food. And I want them to be aware that most of the hunger in the world today can be attributed to political factors, not technological ones.”
“This course has definitely changed how I look at food. Before, I would shop for food that was cheap and didn’t have nasty things in it. But now I think about where the food comes from, what government rules there are and if I’m supporting an undesirable system. The professors were very, very objective and we were given both sides to consider, pros and cons. They wanted us to think critically about the whole issue of food.”

Y1 Journalism student
Common Learning Experiences

6. Setting personal and academic goals and drawing road maps: Academic advising

7. Experiential learning: integration of theory and practice, learning in the workplace and the community (local and global)

8. International experience

9. Capstone experience: final year, integration of knowledge (Undergraduate Research Fellowship)

10. Synergy between formal curriculum, co- and extra-curricula
Experiential Learning

Graduation Requirement
- Soc Sciences Faculty Graduation Requirement (2007-)
  - Social innovation: 12 credits
  - Global citizenship: 12 credits
- Science Faculty Graduation Requirement (2008-)
  - Experiential Learning: 6 or 12 credits
  - Service Learning: non-credit bearing (2010-)
- Architecture Faculty requirement (2008-)
  - One semester placement in Shanghai

Credit bearing
- Arts Faculty (e.g. Japanese Studies, Linguistics, European Studies)

Non-credit bearing
- All Faculties
Science Faculty Experiential Learning

Some key objectives

- to integrate theory and practice, and to understand limitations of their current knowledge
- to broaden their social and cultural experience, and to develop their social and cultural values
- to work in a team and to collaborate with people with diverse background

Types of Experiential Learning:

- Projects
- Field studies
- Summer internship (31 community partners)
- Overseas exchange study (40 universities)
- Research fellowship (local & overseas)
Fac Core courses/ Electives (30 cr)

Common Core (24 cr)

Eng in the Major (6 cr)

Eng (6 cr)

Common Core (12 cr)

Major/ Minor / Electives (42 cr)

Experiential Learning/ International Experience (x cr)

Major/ Minor / Electives (54-60 cr)

Experiential Learning/ International Experience (x cr)

Major/ Minor / Electives (54-60 cr)

Capstone Experience (x cr)

Major/ Minor / Electives (54-60 cr)

Eng in the Major (6 cr)

Eng (6 cr)

Common Core (12 cr)

Experiential Learning/ International Experience (x cr)

Major/ Minor / Electives (54-60 cr)

Capstone Experience (x cr)

Major/ Minor / Electives (54-60 cr)

Yr 4

Chinese (Yr 3 or Yr 4) (6 cr)

Yr 3

Major/ Minor (60 cr)

Major/ Minor / Electives (54-60 cr)

Yr 2

Major/ Minor / Electives (54-60 cr)

Yr 1

First Year Induction [Focused Academic Orientation]
Challenges and Opportunities

- Double cohort
- Transition to university learning
- Flexible curriculum structure and academic advising
- Common Core Courses: intellectually challenging and coherent learning experience; pedagogy
- Shift from norm-referenced to standards-referenced assessment
- Structuring and assessing experiential learning
Thank you