

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

SUMMARY OF MAIN FEATURES OF
THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

(Applicable to all students admitted in and after 2012-13,
except students of the MBChB Programme,
subject to changes approved by the University from time to time)

Academic and Quality Section
Registry
November 2024

Preamble

In the first twenty years or so since its inception, the University adopted an undergraduate curriculum structure (except for MBChB Programme) based on a combination of the credit unit system and the degree examination system. From the intake of 1986-87, the University moved to adopt a new structure solely based on the credit unit system. Starting from the intake of 1991-92, further revisions have been introduced with a view to providing greater flexibility in students' pace of study and selection of courses.

The 3+3+4 curriculum implemented in 2012-13 continues to adopt the credit unit system and students will need to complete a four-year study programme as a norm. Some professional programmes, such as MBChB, will be longer but the principle is an additional year in university (with the exception of LLB which remains four years). The new structure is not just 'one more year', but incorporates a change of emphasis, and a new way of viewing undergraduate education. The curriculum is driven by the desired learning outcomes. The learning processes and the assessment methods are aligned with the outcomes, so that there is a consistent effort to help students attain the desired capabilities.

Curriculum Structure

1. Total Course Load

Students are required to complete 123 units of courses, or other units as prescribed by the University and the study scheme of each programme, before graduation. Senior-year entrants are required to complete at least 69 units of courses before graduation. To ensure a balanced curriculum which is not overloaded with requirements of one type or another and which allows room for development of General Education courses and leeway for a student to select courses of his/her choice, the Senate has set minimum and maximum requirements for the various curricular components.

Students of the Education, Law, and Nursing Programmes are required to complete 147-157, 127, and 151 units of courses respectively, and students of the Chinese Medicine Programme are required to complete 195 units of courses. Senior-year entrants of the Nursing Programme are required to complete 97 units of courses.

2. Major Requirement

To ensure a solid training in the Major discipline, a Major Programme should require students to take at least 51 but no more than 72 units of courses. However, programmes of a professional nature may with permission of the Senate require students more than 72 units.

Although a programme is structured within the prescribed range, a student is allowed to take more than the required number of units in his/her Major Programme, provided that s/he is able to meet all other requirements.

GPA of major courses (at levels and with choices as specified by the Board of the Faculty concerned) and/or other courses will be taken into account for the purpose of degree classification for a student, unless s/he subsequently changes his/her Major Programme. For the Chinese Medicine Programme, all Major courses will be included in the Major GPA calculation.

3. University Core Requirements

Students will have to complete the University Core Requirements, which comprises the following:

- (a) University and College General Education courses;
- (b) Chinese and English languages courses;
- (c) Physical Education courses;

- (d) Digital Literacy and Computational Thinking course;
 - (e) Understanding China; and
 - (f) Hong Kong in the Wider Constitutional Order
- as detailed in the [Undergraduate Student Handbook](#) and the study scheme of the relevant programmes.

4. Double Degree

Students will have the opportunity to earn the first Bachelor's degree plus, after one additional year on self-financed basis (except as required by individual programmes), the second Bachelor's degree.

5. Double Major Option

A student can register for a second Major Programme. A student who wishes to declare a second Major shall apply according to the [prescribed procedures](#) and within the specified application period as determined by the Senate from time to time.

6. Dual Undergraduate Degree Programmes

Students participating in the dual undergraduate degree programmes between CUHK and partner universities will be awarded a bachelor's degree from each of the two universities after fulfilment of the graduation requirements at both universities. Further information is specified in the curriculum framework for students participating in dual undergraduate degree programmes.

7. Double Major Programmes

Students register for specially-curated Double Major Programmes will graduate with one degree award in two Majors. The degree designation shall follow the first Major.

8. Minor Programme

Minor Programmes are optional to students. A student who wishes to declare Minor(s) or change the current Minor(s) shall apply to the Programme(s) concerned according to the [prescribed procedures](#) and within the specified application period. A Minor Programme should require at least 18 but no more than 30 units of courses.

9. Elective Courses

In addition to fulfilling the requirements of his/her Major Programme and University Core Requirements, a student is free to select courses (subject to timetable, course load and study scheme constraints, etc.) in meeting the total units required for graduation. For instance, s/he may complete elective courses in disciplines other than his/her Major Programme; s/he may take more Major or General Education courses; or s/he may opt for Minor Programme(s).

10. Course Load Per Term/Year

A student shall take at least 9 but no more than 18 units of courses in any term within the normative study period, no more than 6 units of courses in each summer session, and no more than 39 units in an academic year, unless being recommended by his/her Major Programme and approved by the Registrar under special circumstances. Students on academic probation shall take a maximum of 12 units per term during first probation, and a maximum of 9 units per term during extended probation.

11. Period of Study

Except for the programmes listed below, the maximum study period of all Major Programmes shall be six years from first registration, which shall include any periods of leave of absence and suspension of

studies, but exclude any periods of compulsory military service as required by a student's nation, unless exemptions have been granted, or otherwise permitted by the Board of the Faculty and approved by the Registrar. A senior-year entrant must complete all requirements for graduation within four years, unless exemptions have been granted, or otherwise permitted by the Board of the Faculty and approved by the Registrar. Unless otherwise provided, a student shall not graduate without having completed at least two years of attendance at the University.

Generally, a student is expected to complete his/her studies in four years while a senior-year entrant is expected to complete his/her studies in two years, except for students of the programmes listed below.

Programmes	Normative study period (years)	Maximum study period (years)
Bachelor of Arts (Chinese Language Studies) and Bachelor of Education (Chinese Language Education)	5	7
Bachelor of Arts (English Studies) and Bachelor of Education (English Language Education)	5	7
Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education	5	7
Liberal Studies	5	7
Mathematics and Mathematics Education	5	7
Physical Education, Exercise Science and Health	5	7
Chinese Medicine	6	8
Nursing	5	7
Nursing (senior-year entrants)	3	5
Business Administration (Integrated BBA Programme) and Juris Doctor	5	7

Students are expected to graduate at the end of the normative study period, except for

- (a) students admitted with Advanced Standing;
- (b) students granted course and unit exemptions; and
- (c) students who have applied in accordance with the relevant regulations and obtained approval for alteration of their periods of study.

12. Course Requirements and Exemptions

A student admitted to a study programme with a normative study period of four years shall complete at least 123 units of courses, or other units as prescribed by the University and the study scheme of each programme, before graduation. Students admitted to study programmes with normative study period other than four years or with qualifications eligible for Advanced Standing and/or unit exemptions shall complete the units of courses and other requirements as prescribed by the Major Programmes and the University as detailed in the [Undergraduate Student Handbook](#) and the study scheme of each programme. A student with recognized post-secondary qualifications may be exempted from some courses and/or units required for graduation according to the procedure prescribed. A student who has obtained such exemptions and has met all other course and unit requirements for graduation must nevertheless satisfy the following conditions for consideration of the award of a CUHK degree:

- (a) s/he shall have completed at least 60 units of courses (senior-year places for Associate Degree/Higher Diploma holders and Dual Undergraduate Degree Programme admission quota of partner universities), 66 units of courses (Dual Undergraduate Degree Programme admission quota of the University), 72 units of courses (for a study programme with a normative study

period of four years), 96 units of courses (for a study programme with a normative study period of five years) or 120 units of courses (for a study programme with a normative study period of six years) at this University;

- (b) s/he shall have completed at least two-thirds of his/her Major requirements at CUHK; and
- (c) s/he shall have completed at least two-thirds of his/her Minor requirements at CUHK, if applicable.

Assessment of Students

1. Course Examinations

To ensure objectivity, reliability, fairness and confidence in the assessment, course examinations of all courses (both Major and non-Major ones) will be centrally scheduled, invigilated and monitored by panels of examiners set up by the Departments/Schools/Programmes. However, courses which are practical in nature (e.g. laboratory courses, Physical Education skill courses) and courses which adopt a continuous assessment approach or other forms of term-end assessment (e.g. project, paper) in lieu of course examination may be excluded from central scheduling with the approval of the Assessment/Examination Panel concerned.

2. Visiting Examiner System/Visiting Committees

The University adopts the Visiting Committee System for external input and benchmarking. The System is built on and has replaced the previous practice of engaging Visiting Examiners (VEs) or External Examiners (EEs) to evaluate teaching programmes. The review is now Faculty-based. To ensure adequate external input, External Examiner is kept for professional programmes.

3. Academic Probation and Discontinuation of Studies

There is no promotion from year to year per se. The year designation for a student only indicates his/her cumulative years of attendance at the University and not his/her level of study. Academic performance is assessed on a term basis.

A student who has obtained a GPA of below 1.5 in a term shall be put on academic probation in the following term. At the end of that term, if s/he obtains a GPA of 1.5 or above, probation shall be lifted; otherwise, probation shall continue to apply in the next term of attendance. S/He shall be required to discontinue his/her studies at the University if s/he still fails to lift his/her probation after having been put on academic probation for two consecutive terms of attendance.

A student who has obtained a GPA of below 1.0 or failed in more than half of the units of courses taken in a term shall be required to discontinue his/her studies, unless s/he has submitted an application in writing to continue studies, and such has been approved by the Major Programme concerned.

A student who has obtained a term GPA of below 1.0 or failed in more than half of the units of courses taken in a term for two consecutive terms of attendance shall be required to discontinue his/her studies.

A student who fails to meet the minimum grade required for specific courses after two attempts, or pass the relevant examination (if any) as prescribed by his/her Major Programme shall be required to discontinue his/her study, unless his/her Faculty Board decides otherwise or s/he can obtain transfer to another Major Programme in the next term of attendance.

Academic reports and transcripts will show all courses taken and retaken, no matter passed or failed. The same applies in the calculation of all GPA, including GPA for degree classification.

4. Graduation

To qualify for a Bachelor's degree, a student apart from meeting all the relevant requirements must obtain a GPA of not less than 1.5 in all Major courses taken which are at 2000 or above level/3000 or above level as decided by the Board of the Faculty to which s/he belongs; or for students of the Bachelor of Chinese Medicine Programme, must obtain a GPA of not less than 1.5 in all Major courses.

Notwithstanding the above and with the exception of students of the Bachelor of Chinese Medicine Programme, a student who has obtained a GPA of below 1.5 but not less than 1.3 in all Major courses taken which are at 2000 or above level/3000 or above level as decided by the Board of the Faculty to which s/he belongs may be recommended by the Undergraduate Examinations Board for the award of a pass degree, subject to his/her satisfying all other requirements for graduation.

Students may graduate upon completion of all requirements and the Degree Certificates shall be issued to students after the conferment of degrees by the University. Degree Certificates for graduates with outstanding debts to the University will be withheld until the accounts are settled.

5. Degree Classification

A student shall be awarded a Bachelor's degree with one of the following classifications:

- (a) First Class Honours
- (b) Second Class Honours Upper Division
- (c) Second Class Honours Lower Division
- (d) Third Class Honours
- (e) Pass

Classification of a student's degree shall be determined by the Undergraduate Examinations Board in its absolute discretion, taking into account the grade point average of Major courses (at levels and with choices as specified by the Board of the Faculty concerned) and/or the grade point average of other courses; and the Undergraduate Examinations Board may also adopt other guidelines if it deems appropriate. For students admitted in 2018-19 and before, the distribution guidelines specified by the Senate will also be taken into account.

If a course is used to satisfy both Major and Minor requirements, the grade thereof will count towards the Major GPA.

Course grades earned at another institution and recognized for exemptions from any University requirements shall not be included in any GPA calculation.