

### Episode 3: Julian's school life in England (3)

- Kitty:** Julian, I'd like to know more about the education system in the U.K. How many subjects do international students have to study in secondary schools?
- Julian:** Well, it depends on the school requirements and what year you enter. **If you start studying from the fourth form, you'll have to take at least 8 subjects.** But when I entered the fifth form, I had to take 5 subjects only.
- Kitty:** Oh... That's quite different. You could take fewer subjects and **focus on** those you like. I bet you performed better in the IGCSE exam.
- Julian:** True. That's why I like to study in the U.K. I didn't have to study "compulsory subjects" like those in HK.
- Kitty:** So, after you finished IGCSE exam, you **moved on** to A-Level and started the sixth form. How many subjects did you have to study then?
- Julian:** Well, I chose 4 subjects, although I just had to take 3 subjects only.
- Kitty:** What subjects did you choose?
- Julian:** Physics, biology and maths, plus further maths as an optional subject.
- Kitty:** Interesting. You didn't have to study English.
- Julian:** No. Because I **set my mind to reading** computer science in university, so I chose science subjects. Actually, when I finished the sixth form, I found out further maths is not necessary in computer science. So, I dropped it in year 13, which was second year of my A-Level.
- Kitty:** It means you just had to study 3 subjects for your A-Level exams.
- Julian:** Exactly.
- Kitty:** I hear you got good exam results, didn't you!?
- Julian:** To be honest with you, my results were **beyond my expectation.** I had never dreamed that I could get an A\*.
- Kitty:** Wow, excellent. Well done, Julian.
- Julian:** Thanks. I believe **I couldn't have got such good results if I'd continued to study in HKG.**
- Kitty:** You've earlier mentioned you were forced to study some "compulsory subjects" in Hong Kong, but you could choose your favourite subjects in the U.K. Was it the main reason?
- Julian:** I think so. I just had to **focus on** the three subjects I really like. Apart from that, I reckon the low "student to teacher ratio" in the U.K. was also a **crucial** factor.
- Kitty:** How many students in your class?

- Julian:** Usually 10 in a class.
- Kitty:** How about when you were studying in Hong Kong?
- Julian:** About 30.
- Kitty:** Whoa, that's a big difference. I imagine your teachers in the U.K. could teach you more intensively.
- Julian:** Right. We could talk to them and ask them questions anytime **at break** or **after school**. Besides, they could spend more time on managing our academic matters and give us thorough feedback on our assignments, which were extremely helpful in improving our performance.
- Kitty:** Now, you've finished A-Level. Do you have any plans for the future?
- Julian:** I want to get involved in robotics and brain-computer interface to which physics and biology are applied. For the meantime, I'm applying to a few universities.
- Kitty:** It seems to me that you're very good at planning. Do you have any suggestions if someone plans to study A-Level and go to university in the U.K.?
- Julian:** Well, I'd suggest **looking into** the course they wish to study in university before choosing A-Level subjects. Try to find out what subjects are required to apply for the course.
- Kitty:** **So much for** your sharing about choices of subjects in A-Level and university. Now, if you compare yourself with 3 years ago, what changes are most noticeable?
- Julian:** Um... In the U.K., I lived in a boarding school with other students from different countries. There are rules about time to **get up**, to have meals, to return to your room and so on. I also had to learn how to use **communal facilities** like the bathroom, the kitchen or the TV room. These made me become more **disciplined** and think before I act, because I'd **be held responsible for** my mistakes in the end.
- Kitty:** True. I've heard boarding schools in the U.K. are famous for turning even the worst student into a disciplined one. Do you think so?
- Julian:** Yeah, I agree after experiencing it myself. As a matter of fact, everyone around me was very hardworking, the strong studying **ambience** motivated me to do the same. I remember I used to **slack off** in Hong Kong, but in the boarding school the students' **industrious** attitudes **rubbed off on** me, which drove me to change my habits and I became more **dedicated** to my study.
- Kitty:** That was amazing, wasn't it? You **couldn't pull yourself up by your own bootstraps** in Hong Kong, but you did it when you were with your friends. **Who says** friends are not important? So, are you going to stay in the U.K. to get a bachelor's degree?

**Julian:** Well, um..., I was offered a place in one of the world top universities in the U.K., but due to COVID-19, I negotiated with the university and managed to **defer** the offer **to** next year. Hope I can return to the U.K. to resume my study then. **After all**, I'm already used to the environment there.

**Kitty:** **If I were you, I would do the same.** Anyway, Julian, I hope you can get good results whatever your choice is. **All roads lead to Rome.**

**Julian:** Thanks.

Kitty Lam