



香港大學

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

SETTING SAIL | MAKING WAVES  
LEADING THE WAY



# ENGAGING WITH THE WORLD

The pandemic may have put a halt to exchanges outside Hong Kong, but it has not prevented the University from finding other ways for students to have enriching activities beyond the classroom.

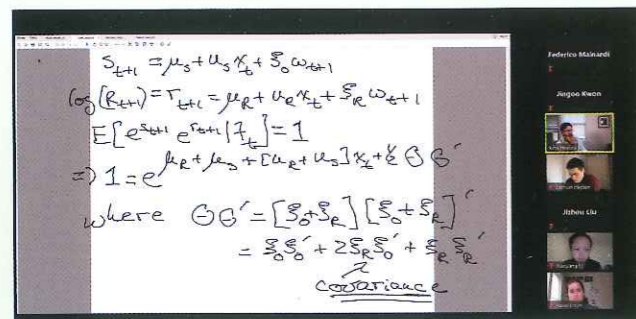
## Going on a Virtual Exchange

Exchanges outside Hong Kong were severely disrupted in 2020 and much of 2021 due to COVID-19 lockdowns. So HKU and about 50 of our partner institutions decided to try another route to bring students to new environments, through virtual exchanges.

The situation required adaptations – credits were awarded only pass / fail grades, it was difficult to accommodate STEM courses requiring lab work, and time differences made it challenging for some students to participate in tutorial groups. Still, 159 HKU students participated in the exchanges and the University welcomed 79 students from outside Hong Kong.

“Our principle was to not hinder final-year students who need an overseas experience to fulfil graduation requirements. The University accepted the virtual programme to replace the in-person programme of before,” said Ms Iris Ip, programme manager of the International Affairs Office.

Krisya Louie, a Bachelor of Social Sciences student, did a full-year virtual exchange with the University of Chicago that was originally meant to be in person. “I didn’t



Student Huang Shunzhuang, who joined the virtual exchange at the University of Chicago, discussing asset pricing with classmates for a research project.

want to give up the opportunity to learn from some of the brightest minds in psychology, so I continued with the exchange,” she said – and despite a schedule that often ended after 3am given time differences, she found the experience enriching. In addition to classes and interactions with leading scholars, she also participated in a virtual palaeontology expedition to Greenland and met up online with exchange students from around the world. “The intense pacing pushed me to learn a lot in a short time frame. It was an exciting challenge and I felt I learned a lot more about myself and what I was capable of.”

In-person exchanges remain the ideal, though, and are resuming in 2021–22. One of those participating is Ms Louie, who is now in her fourth year and a visiting scholar at Oxford University.

## Creative Approaches to Teaching Archaeology

A planned expedition for undergraduate students to conduct archaeological fieldwork in the South Caucasus moved online and into the Hong Kong community in the wake of COVID-19.

The expedition was part of the new Bachelor of Education course Cultural Heritage and Information in the Field that was launched in summer 2020 by Dr Peter J Cobb in partnership with the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography at the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. They had to quickly adapt to the reality that an overseas trip was out of the question. “There were two main topics – dealing with the cultural heritage, i.e., the archaeology itself, and also dealing with the information science aspect of fieldwork – digital methods. The second aspect was quite straightforward to carry out without travel, but we also found creative ways to teach students about cultural heritage,” Dr Cobb said.



A visit to the Sha Lo Tung historical village, guided by Maxime Decaudin, Assistant Lecturer from the Division of Landscape Architecture. Students carried out mapping activities while making observations about irrigation, farmland, forests, and architecture in the local landscape.



Students acting like they had been transported to the Vedi Fortress in Armenia, while actually being at the HKU Main Library and taken on a virtual reality tour of the archaeological site by Dr Peter J Cobb.

In 2020, students worked with their counterparts from Armenia and other students from the University of Pennsylvania on tasks such as 3D modelling and creating ceramics databases. Research posters that they produced were accepted to the Archaeological Institute of America’s annual meeting in January 2021.

One of the poster creators was Ms Agnes Sung Pui-yee, a biochemistry major, who became a teaching assistant to the course in summer 2021. The 2021 intake worked online, too, but this time students were taken on field trips to Hong Kong cultural heritage sites to gain hands-on experience in the physical processes of archaeology. “This course has made me reconsider my interests, passion and strengths,” said Ms Sung, who has decided to become an archaeologist.

Dr Cobb said that while students had enjoyed learning the new digital technologies and the Hong Kong field trips, he hoped they could get back to their original goal in 2022: taking students to Armenia.

## There’s No Place Like Home

Until the pandemic, HKU sent planeloads of students abroad every year for anything from one week to a full year to study, do service learning and undertake internships. When travel was put on hold, the HKU Horizons Office sought out broadening experiences within Hong Kong itself.

In collaboration with the School of Chinese and external partners, four programmes were organised on heritage-rich Lantau Island in 2021, focussing on religious diversity, cultural heritage and rituals, art and art creation, and the natural environment. Students visited monasteries and churches, participated in the Dragon Boat Festival and races, visited historic buildings, talked with artists and did outdoor sketching, and went on hikes, dolphin-watching and birdwatching. Another programme took students sailing around Hong Kong Island to learn about Hong Kong’s seafaring history, as well as basic navigation and sailing techniques. Each programme was limited to 12 participants under pandemic restrictions.

“The students were very positive about the experiences. For instance, although the majority were from Hong Kong and had been to Tai O [on Lantau], they knew nothing about what we showed them. It was an opportunity for them to join in local activities and talk to local people. They also conducted surveys in Tai O to help local people and helped make signage posts,” said Dr Parry Leung of HKU Horizons Office.

He added that the programmes will be continued and consideration is being given to how to make them more structured and in-depth. Dr Hayson Liu Shun-hei of the School of Chinese sees much possibility. “Cross-border travelling is not necessarily about visiting a foreign country. By studying our own history and contemplating our mind, we could continue to seek the unknown and broaden man’s quest for knowledge despite challenges,” he said.



Students in the community service programme helped make signage for the Luk Wu to Tai O footpath.



The programme offers students an opportunity to visit stilt houses and talk to local people in Tai O.