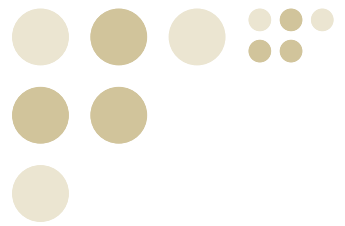


dialogue



Issue 02 2008 - 2009

First Year Experience



- ➔ Transition from secondary school to university life
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New & Fresh

In 2009,
the Chinese New Year falls on January 26.
How would you like to decorate your room with
bright red banners featuring an attractive modern design
and declaring "Fai Chun" in Cantonese?
In this issue, red banners with words of blessing
are included for you, from us, to help you celebrate this
most important Chinese festival.



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Transition from secondary school to university life – The first year experience

Albert Chau
Dean of Student Affairs

When students enter university, they are confronted by many new challenges and demands. They need to make numerous decisions for their study based on a large amount of novel information. They become more independent. Perhaps for the first time in their lives, they are expected to take full responsibility to manage their own time and finance or even become self-supporting. Some may live away from their parents. Because of these big changes in their study and personal lives, the first year in university is indeed a major life change for students.

The first year in university is also a critical stage in which students develop their attitudes and approaches to learning. Students start to build learning communities with their teachers and peers that will provide the necessary social and academic support for their development.

In view of the above, a successful first year experience is thus closely related to the satisfaction with the university experience as a whole. In order to smoothen the transition and help students to fully benefit from the available learning opportunities, many universities pay a great deal of attention to students' first year experience. In the USA, the Policy Center on the First Year of College was set up in 1999 with the aim of improving the effectiveness of the first year in university.

At HKU, the Center of Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT) and Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS) jointly conducted surveys on the first year entrants and students who had just completed their first year in 2007. The findings revealed that many first year entrants had high expectations of the University. They believed the learning aims of the University would be achieved, they expected their studies to be intellectually stimulating and university education to be satisfying.

The students who had completed their first year were, in general, satisfied with their experience at the University. The majority of them felt positive about being HKU students and had a rather strong sense of belonging to HKU. Most also found the first year experience had opened up an exciting future for them.

To the students who had completed their first year, the biggest differences between secondary and university education lay in the relationship with teachers, approaches to teaching and learning, amount of information to cope with, choice of courses, class size, and diversity of student grouping. In particular, students found university education much more intellectually demanding because of the amount and difficulty level of the course materials. They also needed to manage their commitments more carefully because of the availability of so many activities and learning opportunities. Some students also needed to adapt to the enquiry-based learning mode in the University, as opposed to the largely transmissive mode in secondary school. First year students also wished to have more information on the programme structure, study and professional skills required by the programme, and postgraduate opportunities.

The University is continuously improving its support for first year students. Many faculties have, or will initiate, an academic advisory system in which teachers and staff provide information and suggestions on how students may structure their major and minor courses to achieve their academic and personal goals. Students can also discuss with their teachers about the study and professional skills required of the curriculum, as well as the outside classroom experiences that best compliment the formal curriculum. The advisory system will be strengthened as the course choices become more diverse in future. It will also cover cross-faculty course selections and other combinations.

Another very important area is engagement of first year students into the University community as early as possible. Through induction programmes and student activities, first year students are connected to their faculties, departments and halls. We also hope students can develop a learning community very quickly. The learning community may consist of their peers, senior students and teachers. In many overseas universities, this is also achieved through the first year seminar. In the seminar, a small group of students work together with their teacher on an intellectually stimulating topic. They together undertake an intellectual discovery and produce a creative learning product such as a play, new machine or movie.

Needless to say, the most crucial factor of a successful first year experience is students' own initiative. They need to formulate goals and decide priorities. During this process, listening to other people's experiences can be most helpful. On the basis of other people's experiences, they can carefully consider various viewpoints and experiences, and assimilate them into their own plans. It is also important for students to spend more time on campus to join the non-credit-bearing programmes and activities of the student societies.

In this issue of Dialogue, you will find a range of programmes provided by the University and many students' stories of their first year as a university student. I believe you will find some useful information and insights. Teachers in your faculty and my colleagues in CEDARS are also very willing to do our best to enable you to get the best out of this very important transition and formative stage in your life.

Cover Story



Dr Chau suggests ways of enriching students' first-year experience.

First year students are fresh, but definitely not idle

Alison Lam
Journalism, Year 3

Words commonly used by students we interviewed to describe their first year included “challenging” and “fulfilling”, but most frequent of all, “busy”.

Sissi Zhu Qi, a business student from Mainland China, remembered having a good start in her fresh year by joining the Induction Programme organised by CEDARS. She was able to join in some social circles and grasp a basic understanding of different aspects of HKU. She enjoyed visiting the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and attending the formal high table dinner, wearing a traditional green gown.

Academically, Sissi admitted feeling quite tense about her studies. She felt challenged by the difficult English vocabulary, more advanced projects and tight schedule in Hong Kong.

Sissi still managed to pack in a number of extra-curricular activities to her busy schedule. As a resident of Lady Ho Tung Hall she explored lots of new things - from the bridge team, the tennis team, the high tables, the hall forums, and even a night for having drinks in Lang Kwai Fong with her hallmates! She quickly grew fond of her hall because of its proximity to HKU, and the friendly hallmates.

Besides a vigorous hall life, Sissi also joined the student society, AIESEC. She was able to interact with peers of different nationalities and enhance her leadership qualities through joining a camp-style training conference.

Right now, Sissi is considering what has been called “a rare commitment” by other mainland students - to be an executive member of AIESEC. Although the activity is said to be time-consuming, Sissi feels that the experience will be rewarding and unique in her university life.

When asked to recall his first year, Oscar Leung, a year 3 student of Business Administration (Law) remembered a pretty swift transition. This is because he managed to seek advice from senior students and made friends during an orientation camp.

Oscar's first year was packed with extra-curricular activities. He became an executive member of the Business Association and a Trade Development Council (TDC) Ambassador. He recalled working along with local enterprises for social projects, firm visits and dinners. As a TDC Ambassador, Oscar was able to try out many positions during trade fairs, with tasks ranging from handling reception to fair tour guide to meeting VIPs.

Oscar also got academic inspiration from working on a business project with people of diverse nationalities. There he learned about accepting different viewpoints and the importance of mutual understanding.

Oscar summed up by saying that the first year is all about “choice”. With a variety of attractive activities – halls, student societies, studies, work – how can you pick the best and utilise your limited time to the maximum? Oscar felt that the first year was a time for him to discover his true priorities, which greatly impacted on his second and third years.

As a student studying Social Sciences from the Early Admission Scheme (EAS), Ip Siu-tung felt that the greatest first year challenge came from his academic studies.

He recalled feeling lost when the semester began as he didn't even know the basics such as online course selection. As for lectures, he felt that lessons went at a rather fast pace. “If you can't catch up, you can't catch up,” he said. Fortunately, he was able to discuss details later with classmates and tutors during his tutorials.

The peak of stress, he recalled, was during the examination period, when he not only studied for his exam but also had to meet essay deadlines. He had a hard time managing both tasks all at once.

Siu-tung spared time for extra-curricular activities despite the busy schedule. For a start, he has become one of the Student Ambassadors of HKU. Under this scheme, he shared his experience as a EAS student with F6 students. Siu-tung has led HKU guided tours, and did so during a visit by Diocesan Girls' School. His most memorable experience was to attend the sharing session of Shenzhou VII crew in Hong Kong as a representative of HKU.

Summing up his experiences, Siu-tung advised freshmen to transit gradually, and keep their minds open for new opportunities.



Sissi (third from left) starts her university life from the Induction Programme.



At AIESEC, Sissi participates in a poster design competition which promotes the use of environmentally-friendly paper.



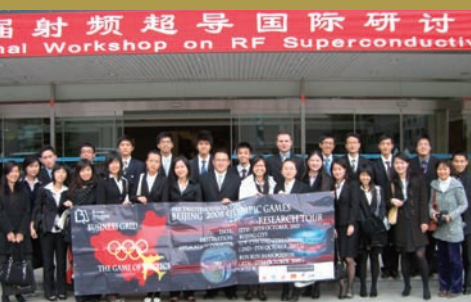
Sissi at the Leadership Development Series of AIESEC



Oscar (right) at a business workshop



As a TDC Ambassador, Oscar attends the Hong Kong Toys and Games Fair 2008.



Oscar and other members of the Business Association go to Beijing for an Olympic research tour.



Siu-tung (second from right, first row) meets distinguished astronauts and scientists at the Shenzhou VII seminar.



Siu-tung at an ecology course



香港大學

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

The Chinese believe that each calendar year is ruled by one animal, and there are 12 animals in one cycle. 2009 marks the Year of the Ox.

Red banners that read "吉" (good fortune) should be posted upside down as the word when posted this way rhymes with "coming" in Chinese, meaning "good fortune comes".

Calligraphy work by Pun Ping-hung, Su Yi Chuan Calligraphy Association of Hong Kong



身體健康

學子與年進



香港大學
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



香港大學
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

During Chinese New Year, married people give away red packets that contain sweet surprises and people give words of blessing to each other for the year ahead.

Of all things, our well-being is the most important. We wish you good health.

Calligraphy work by Pun Ping-hung, Su Yi Chuan
Calligraphy Association of Hong Kong

Literally, this red banner reads that knowledge grows with time. We wish that you will continue to expand your knowledge, make progress in your studies and grow as individuals in the time you spend on the campus.

Calligraphy work by Pun Ping-hung, Su Yi Chuan
Calligraphy Association of Hong Kong

Recipients of the First-in-the-Family Education (FIFE) Fund eagerly shared their plans for using the fund to enrich their learning experiences. All of them agree that the fund allows them to engage in different learning opportunities, which may have been impossible for them otherwise with their current financial situations.

Sylvia, a science student majoring in ecology and biodiversity, plans to travel all the way to Africa. She has a passion for cheetahs, which are now an endangered species because of loss of habitat, poaching, a decline in prey and being hunted for preying on domestic livestock. Sylvia hopes that by studying cheetahs in Africa, she can come up with ways to save the endangered animal. Her aspiration requires financial support, and she is grateful for the fund and its various donors.



At the "First-in-the-Family Education Fund" Presentation and Sharing Ceremony, the first batch of recipients share their learning aspirations and thank all supporters of the Fund.

Hinson and Jeffrey both study Economics and Finance. With the fund's help, Hinson would like to develop his interest in languages by taking certificate language courses. Jeffrey feels that an overseas exchange is an essential part to his university life because of the life-transforming experiences. Both students agree that the generous funding from the university and donors will help them realise their plans. Hinson suggests that recipients should "take and give" by helping the next generations of university students when they graduate. Jeffrey feels that ability and responsibility are inter-related. He hopes that university students can contribute more by doing voluntary services like assisting in charity fundraising.

Another student, Loui, who studies nursing, has multiple plans for the fund. First, Loui wants to enhance her medical and nursing skills. This can make her better prepared for future services, as she plans to offer medical help to remote areas in Mainland China in future. She has already been gaining experience by committing as a Red Cross volunteer. Besides her profession, Loui wants to become a volunteer to promote tourism in Hong Kong. Last but not least, she has a deep interest in dancing and would like to be more sophisticated by taking more related courses. Loui feels greatly touched by the generosity of HKU alumni. She is especially impressed by the fact that these alumni do not just contribute financially, but also spare time to return to their alma mater in person to chat with current students. She realises that "contribution" is not limited to monetary donation, and can take many forms.

Grateful recipients share ambitious plans for using FIFE funds

Alison Lam
Journalism, Year 3

First-in-the-Family Education Fund



Apart from academic excellence, HKU emphasises the importance of whole-person education and contribution to society. Various out-of-classroom activities, such as overseas exchanges, internships and voluntary projects, are offered to nurture students into well-rounded social leaders upon graduation. Yet students with financial difficulties may find some of these activities unaffordable.

With this vision, the First-in-the-Family Education (FIFE) Fund was set up by HKU to support students in participating in alternative learning activities. First year students who are the first members in their family to enter university, and who have financial needs, can apply for the fund by submitting their learning plans.

Plans submitted cover a large variety of activities ranging from learning Cantonese Opera, or taking an internship in Pakistan to working as a volunteer in overseas organic farms!

Student recipients are very eager to realise their plans immediately. Some have already said they hoped to become future donors of the FIFE fund. It is hoped that recipients can themselves become contributors to society in future.

For details about the FIFE fund, please visit www.hku.hk/fife

Joint efforts bring maximum results

Alison Lam
Journalism, Year 3

It is not an exaggeration to say that university marks the transition from teenage years to adulthood. To have a fruitful university life, it is crucial that first year students transit into the HKU environment smoothly. To ensure that, the four sections of CEDARS – Campus Life, Careers and Placement, Counselling and Person Enrichment and Student Development – work together to offer comprehensive help to first year students.

Student Accommodation is part of the scope of services in the Campus Life Section of CEDARS. As the shortage of residential hall places is a rather hot topic these days, the focus of this article is on how the University tackles the matter.

Mr Patrick Tang, the Director of Campus Life, emphasises that hall education is part of the holistic approach to University education. Hence, on-campus accommodation arrangements for our students have been accorded very high priority by the University, particularly at a time when the University is moving towards adopting a more international perspective and the admission of non-local students is on the rise every year. In anticipation of the new curriculum and the overall increase in the student intake from 2012, and in recognising the real need for more student accommodation, the University has planned to solve the problem in a number of ways.

Mr Tang mentions a variety of strategies to cope with the short supply of residential places, both now and in the future. Certain measures have been implemented to provide alternative choices in recent years, including the conversion of existing University buildings into non-hall housing at Patrick Manson Student Residence, near the student flats at Sassoon Road, and at the Pokfield Road Residences, adjacent to the Flora Ho Sports Centre. In 2007, an initiative was taken to rent private accommodation in the vicinity of the University to increase the stock of student accommodation for non-local students and also local students who were in need. Since then, four new halls are under construction in Lung Wah Street in Kennedy Town, which will provide 1,800 additional residential places for students. This project is expected to be completed by May, 2012.

The Campus Life section has been proactively addressing the problem of student accommodation shortages, and Mr Tang regards this as one of his major challenges. He also realises that the challenge is ongoing, and will persist even after the completion of the new halls in 2012, for as long as the University remains a popular academic choice for local and international students.

Career preparation should start as early as the first year, says Mr Herman Chan, the Director of Careers and Placement of CEDARS.

Mr Chan says freshmen are usually preoccupied by study, adjusting to life in university and social networking - career planning does not even figure in their top five priorities. Some students still do not have a proper CV prepared when they apply for internships and overseas exchange programmes in their second year.

He suggests that the first year can also be a great time for exploration by students of their career interests. Initiatives such as personality tests and researching your target industry to grasp an understanding of market conditions help students better understand themselves and the career choices they will make. Mr Chan notes that mainland freshmen are eager to learn about their target careers, and urges local students to be more proactive also.

Students who are serious about career planning should watch out for the Professional Preparation Programme (PPP) offered by Mr Chan's section. The PPP is tailor-made for different faculties and requires 20 to 30 contact hours within a single semester. Students will engage themselves in a series of activities including company visits, mock interviews, group discussion training and case studies. The aim is to give students a taste of the real world of work through learning from instructors who are senior business professionals. It is hoped that when the new curriculum is launched, the programme can become a regular activity for every HKU student.

Freshmen need to accept that there is a period of adjustment to university life, observes Dr Eugenie Leung, the Director of Counselling and Person Enrichment of CEDARS.

Academically, students are required to be more independent and self-disciplined, which for some can make projects, essays and examinations more stressful. With most freshmen coming from single child or small families, there can also be difficulties and tension arising when hall residents share rooms and common facilities. Dr Leung advises students to tackle these challenges with maturity and a sense of responsibility. Stress can also be a factor, be it from relationships with parents, peers, teachers, lovers or employers. Anxiety, loss of appetite, insomnia, crying and depression are common symptoms.

If you feel stressed out, Dr Leung's advice is: "Help is at hand". Indeed, any student can book a time to meet a counsellor, or simply visit the CEDARS drop-in service from 2pm to 5pm on weekdays.

Besides the counselling service, Dr Leung's section is preparing a new programme - "Psychosocial Transition from Secondary to University Education Programme". One of its main items of interest is a web-based psychological portfolio for all students. Students can try some professional online tests to learn about their personality, stress level, learning style and character strengths. Person enrichment workshops and learning materials also help them to improve themselves. Students will also be able to view their own e-Portfolio from time to time.

A campus tour, high table dinner, community visit, social networking, life planning...these are all attractive activities that underline the new Induction Programme organised by CEDARS in the summer of 2008.

Mr Chong Chan-yau says that successful induction is a significant factor in learning at university because it can help students obtain a university feel for thinking and studying. Its intensive nature enables both local and international students to take up the HKU identity and develop a sense of belonging to the University as a whole.

Besides helping students through the new induction programme, CEDARS also promotes "global citizenship" to make freshmen better future leaders. Mr Chong understands the concept is unfamiliar to most freshmen, and urges them to explore it.

Global citizenship means caring about other communities and cultures in the world besides our own. We should always act responsibly, as our activities can often impact on other communities. Ultimately, global citizens strive to promote universal equality, human rights and dignity. Some issues frequently explored are HIV/AIDS, poverty, unbalanced trade, terrorism etc.

One of the educational aims of HKU is to foster leaders and advocates for improvement to the human condition. Our society needs passionate youngsters to strive for making a difference in the world. A global citizenship website is currently under construction by CEDARS to further promote the concept.

Careers and Placement

Counselling and Person Enrichment

Student Development



Faculties' programmes for first year students

Besides orientation activities, the University's faculties have been embarking on a wide range of programmes to enhance students' first-year experience. The table below gives you a glimpse of their work as at the academic year of 2008-2009.

Faculty	Programme	Detail / Website
Faculty of Architecture	Field Trip (for students of Architectural Studies)	First year students of Architectural Studies are able to go on a field trip to foundational cities in Asia for a better understanding of their history, culture, urban fabric and architecture.
Faculty of Arts	Academic Advisory System	This system aims to offer comprehensive information on the BA programme to help students familiarise themselves with the curriculum structure and the content, develop their academic interests and plan their studies in accordance with the regulations and curricular options: http://arts.hku.hk/homepage/BAprogramme
Faculty of Business and Economics	Academic Advising Session	Academic advising sessions for freshmen majoring in Accounting cover information on the curriculum, the course sequencing and prerequisites, as well as enrichment opportunities.
	Mentorship Programme	Faculty members meet their assigned groups of students at least once a semester to discuss topics that hold no intellectual boundaries. It encourages their interaction and close rapport beyond classrooms.
	Professional Preparation Programme	This is a full-year, non-credit-bearing course to prepare BBA(Accounting & Finance) Year 1 and 2 students for a career in professional accounting.
	Professional Seminar Series	The Seminar Series is held around the year to help students relate their study to the real world: http://www.sef.hku.hk/events/seminar
Faculty of Dentistry	Workshops on Problem-based Learning	These workshops aim to provide ongoing support for students' transition to the Faculty's open-discovery mode of problem-based learning, particularly in the aspects of group work processes and self-directed learning. Apart from encouraging critical reflection on how to enhance individual and group learning, the workshops help students develop new learning and research skills.
Faculty of Education	Student-Staff Consultative Meetings	Student representatives, Programme Directors, Stream Co-ordinators and Course Tutors meet every semester to exchange views on the academic programmes.
	Student Forum	Students will be briefed on the latest results of the University of Hong Kong Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (HKUSLEQ). The Forum aims to raise their awareness of the survey, encourage their participation and offer the Faculty's responses to issues raised by students.
Faculty of Engineering	Sharing Session	-
	Academic/Student Advisors Scheme	There are teachers from each department to serve as the Academic / Student Advisor. First year students are free to contact them for advice on course / programme selection and for other academic enquiries.
	Mentorship Programme	Each student will be assigned a mentor for experience-sharing, and for academic and non-academic matters. Details will be announced shortly.
Faculty of Law	Personal Tutor System	Each student is assigned a teacher in the Department as their personal tutor. The tutor's role includes monitoring students' academic performances, their health and finances and other things that may affect their academic performance, their outside activities, and giving feedback on their courses.
Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine	Programme for Effective Transition and Student Support (PETSS)	http://www.hku.hk/facmed/imhse/core5.html
Faculty of Science	Publications	Handbook for BSc I & II Students: http://www.hku.hk/science/current/bsc/handbook.html The handbook includes "Tips for Choosing Your Major" which offers students' suggestions on things to consider in deciding when / what / how to declare their Science majors. BSc Syllabuses: http://www.hku.hk/science/current/bsc/syllabuses.html
	Major Selection Assistant	This interactive online tool in the Science Student Intranet keeps individual students' academic profiles and allows them to explore different Science major / minor combinations.
	Meeting with Course Selection Advisor (CSA)	All BSc I students are required to meet at least one CSA from the major of their own choice to discuss their course selection in the first course selection period before the start of the first semester.
	Lectures	Lectures on Academic Induction and a series of public lectures are held throughout the academic year.
Faculty of Social Sciences	Academic Advisor System	All freshmen are assigned academic advisors from their core academic departments. They are expected to meet their academic advisors at least twice in the first semester, and once in the second semester.
	Student Mentorship Scheme	Student mentors from the Social Science Society help new students adjust and adapt better to the University.
	Global Vision Programme	A country that is of interest from a social scientist's perspective is selected every semester to broaden students' views on global issues.

New & Fresh

Rebuilding Sichuan: We need your support!

Irene Hui
Graduate of Arts (English Studies and Translation)

Two months on from the devastating Sichuan earthquake that left more than 90,000 people dead or missing, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Beijing Normal University (BNU) have worked in close collaboration on the Catastrophe Management Initiative (CMI) project. The CMI project is a pioneering project in Hong Kong and in Mainland China, aiming to address issues in catastrophe management ranging from rescue to relief, and from reconstruction to rehabilitation. The comprehensive project targets not only at government officials, but also survivors and many others who lost relatives and loved ones, homes and livelihoods.

In partnership with the United Nations (UN) and supported by Sichuan Provincial Government, HKU and BNU ran a training workshop for 80 front-line cadres from the quake-hit zones, conducted site visits and hosted a two-day conference entitled "Global Dialogue on Wenchuan Earthquake Response: Challenges and Governance" in Chengdu, Sichuan, in mid-November 2008. The HKU delegation of 30 members, led by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Chow Shew-ping, attended the training workshop and the conference to share views and good practices with international experts. Several HKU scholars were invited to speak at the conference, including Professor Cecilia Chan, Director of the Centre on Behavioural Health, Professor Cheng Kai-ming, the Senior Advisor to Vice-Chancellor and Professor Chan Yuen-ying, Director of the Journalism and Media Studies Centre. You can now listen to two recent interviews on U-Radio to learn more about what HKU has done to help in the aftermath of last May's earthquake disaster: one with Professor Cecilia Chan on Sichuan's long-term community capacity rebuilding plan, and another with Professor Chow Shew-ping on a series of HKU's rebuilding initiatives.
(Cyber Campus: U-Radio: <http://uradio.cybercampus.hku.hk>)

HKU has launched a website entitled "China Earthquake: HKU Action" (<http://www.hku.hk/chineseearthquake>) which is a one-stop platform for HKU members to post meaningful events, discuss further action and volunteer possibilities as well as share views concerning the earthquake. Also, you can help the HKU's CMI project by making a small donation to the 512 Earthquake Roundtable Fund online. Your help can make a difference!



Members of HKU are among those who join the Mainland cadres in their training workshop held at a school in the temporary housing area.



The "China Earthquake: HKU Action" website

What's on @ CEDARS (Second Semester of 2008 - 2009)

Events	Organised by	Date, Time & Venue	Event Highlights	Contact	Website
Person Enrichment Activities	CEDARS - Counselling and Person Enrichment	Feb 2 - Apr 1	A series of innovative events with titles such as "Photo Exhibition - Out of the Ordinary: Alternative Scenic Spots of HKU", and "Masquerade Party: Speed Dating Experience" are offered to help you discover your inner strengths and beauty.	2857 8388 cedars-counselling@hku.hk	http://cedars.hku.hk/lis/0809b
Road Show on Student Finance	CEDARS - Campus Life	Feb 9 - 11 Run Run Shaw Podium	Want to know more about the financial options available at HKU? Come to our enquiry counter.	2859 2305 cedars@hku.hk	
Careers Fair 2009	CEDARS	Mar 10 - 13 12:30pm - 3:00pm Run Run Shaw Podium	A Careers Fair will be organised to enhance your career readiness. Advice to help you to survive the economic downturn will be given.	2857 8387 cedars-programmes@hku.hk	http://cedars.hku.hk

The list is not exhaustive. Please visit the CEDARS' website (<http://cedars.hku.hk>) and the websites of student societies for the latest programmes on the campus. Student societies interested in promoting their activities in Dialogue please contact CEDARS-Student Development at cedars-programmes@hku.hk.