

# History and Development

## 1888-1904: the early day of Guangzhou

The history of Lingnan University can be dated back to 1888, when the American Presbyterian Church set up the Christian College in China in Guangzhou. Its first intake of just 30 students began attending lessons there on 28 March the same year.

In 1893, the Christian College in China disassociated itself from the American Presbyterian Church, and became a Christian university governed by a board of trustees based in New York. Due to China's political instability at that time, the College became the target of anti-foreign antagonism. In 1900, the government's suspicions about its activities were aroused when Shi Jianru, one of its former students, unsuccessfully tried to assassinate the Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi. To avoid political reprisals, the College temporarily retreated to Macau. In 1903, it changed its English name to Canton Christian College, and adopted the Chinese title Lingnan Xuetang. This was the first time it used the term Lingnan. The College finally returned to Guangzhou in 1904, where it occupied a new site of about 30 acres that had been purchased at Kangle Cun, Henan, Guangzhou. It was to become the College's permanent location.

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## 1905 – 1937: Becoming a key educational institution in southern China

trees, and the garden of the campus itself. The emblem is still used today, as well as the red and grey colour scheme that the College adopted for its flags at sports meets.

In September 1912, without changing its name in English, the College changed its Chinese name to *Lingnan Xuexiao*. By 1918, it began offering university-level programmes, and awarded certificates to its first three graduands. At the same time, 15 renowned universities, including Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Stanford in the US and Toronto in Canada, announced that Lingnan's graduates would be eligible to apply for their postgraduate programmes.

In 1926, *Lingnan Xuexiao* fell foul of a new regulation imposed by the nationalist government that prohibited foreigners from operating universities in China. It responded by establishing a predominantly Chinese board of trustees who took over its administration. In January 1927, the trustees elected Chung Wing-kwong as its President, and Lee Ying-lam as Vice-President. Under this new leadership, the College changed its Chinese name to Lingnan Daxue and the English name was changed to Lingnan University accordingly. In March the same year, President Chung asked the government to officially recognise Lingnan as an international, private, Christian university. Between 1927 and the eve of the war of resistance against Japan, its curriculum was expanded from the original arts and science courses to include agriculture, commerce, civil engineering and medicine. Primary and secondary school, classes for overseas Chinese, and a Lingnan school in Hong Kong were established too. In the process, Lingnan emerged as a key educational institution in southern China.

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## 1938 – 1944: Relocated thrice during the Anti-Japanese War

During the anti-Japanese War, Lingnan moved in 1938 to Hong Kong, where its middle school had relocated at Leung Garden, Castle Peak Bay, the previous year. Lingnan continued its classes at what is now The University of Hong Kong campus, while its department of agriculture leased a farmland in Lam Tei, Tuen Mun. Following the fall of Hong Kong in December 1941, the then Lingnan University's President, Lee Ying-lam, led its faculty and students on an arduous journey to Shaoguan in northern Guangdong Province. Assisted by the nationalist government and its US-based trustees, the University re-established itself there at Qujiang Dacun, and the campus was named "Lingnan University Village". However, as the war progressed, Lingnan was forced to move once again, this time to Meixian, east of the Pearl River.

The Japanese surrender in 1945 made it possible for Lingnan University to return to its Guangzhou campus, where its long-suffering President Lee Ying-lam, who took on the mission to restore the campus, completed the formidable task of reconstruction. In August 1948, Chen Xujing took over as the new President, and he oversaw a rapid rise in its status. Himself a well-known academic, Chen was a proponent of westernisation, and he was determined to make Lingnan University the best higher learning institution in the country. The University became a magnet for the best minds of contemporary China, thus opening the most magnificent chapter it had ever experienced.

However, Lingnan's golden era came to an end with a nationwide higher education reform undertaken in late 1952. The former Lingnan campus became the campus of Sun Yat-sen University, while the former programmes or faculties of Lingnan University were merged into other institutions in Guangzhou. This abruptly ended Lingnan's 60 eventful years as an eminent education institution in the Chinese Mainland.

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## **1967 – 1978: The Re-establishment of Lingnan University in Hong Kong**

Following the closure of Lingnan University in Guangzhou, its alumni began to nurture a common goal – to re-establish it in a new location. In September 1967, Lingnan alumni in the city set up the Lingnan College Co Ltd, as a first step towards its re-establishment. To promote this cause further, Lingnan's educational enterprise in Hong Kong, Lingnan College Co Ltd, merged with Lingnan Secondary School Co Ltd to form the Lingnan Education Organization Co Ltd.

The first classes of the new Lingnan College were conducted at Lingnan Middle School. They were attended by 100 students, including 30 freshmen and some boarders. As the years passed, and with the alumni's increasing support, Lingnan College was able to build more facilities, including a teaching and administration block, main hall, language laboratory, library, and hostel for faculty and administration staff, just like other tertiary institutions. Thanks to the efforts of its staff and students, the College's status as a tertiary institution had gained recognition from over 70 North American universities by 1974. In 1978, it was recognised as a registered post-secondary institution; it changed its name to *Lingnan Xueyuan* in Chinese and started offering government-subsidised programmes. Lingnan adopted a 2-2-1 course structure in 1978. This consisted of a two-year advanced-level course, a two-year

## **1979 – 1987: Preparing for accreditation**

In the following ten years, Lingnan alumni helped build the College into a highly regarded institution, thereby laying solid foundations for its future. In 1983, its President, Dr John T S Chen, took upon himself the laborious task of raising the College's academic standing. During his tenure, he appointed a large number of renowned academics, re-structured the academic departments, reformed the curriculum, and promoted general education, all to prepare for Lingnan's accreditation. With a view to reforming its academic programmes, Lingnan stopped offering programmes in its music department, and introduced social science and general education programmes in 1983. A translation course was added in 1986. By this time, Lingnan's advanced-level course was gradually being phased out, and the resources devoted to it were channelled to developing the honours diploma. In December 1987, the United Kingdom Council for National Academic Awards conducted a comprehensive institutional review on Lingnan. The Council highly commended the College for its rapid development over the years, and concluded that Lingnan's academic level was on par with institutions under the aegis of the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (UPGC).

## **1988 – 1994: Becoming a degree-conferring institution**

In 1988, the government approved to increase Lingnan's subvention to a level that would enable it to develop honours diploma programmes. At this time, the government was about to make Lingnan a member of the UPGC, which would enable it to confer degrees. This was helped by a review of the College by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation in 1991. Its members were impressed by the excellence of Lingnan's teaching and administrative staff, and the achievements of its students. Lingnan was deemed qualified to offer degree programmes. The government accepted the members' proposal, and Lingnan was made a degree-conferring institution under the UPGC in the same year. The first bachelor programmes it offered were in translation and social sciences. These were followed by Chinese and business administration programmes in 1994.

## **1995 – 1999: Moving to Tuen Mun campus and acquiring university status**

reflecting its fine tradition, which dated back to 1888. Upon moving to the new campus, the University launched Master of Philosophy programmes. In 1998, it was given self-accrediting status; and in 1999 it was renamed Lingnan University.

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## 2000 – Present

The University continued to grow as it entered the 21st century, adding postgraduate programmes and establishing a school of continuing education and a community college, thereby offering quality education to Hong Kong and the region.

To enhance the effectiveness of liberal-arts education, Lingnan University introduced an Integrated Learning Programme (ILP) in 2001. The ILP offers non-credit bearing training in six domains, namely, civic education, intellectual development, physical education, social and emotional development, aesthetic development and hostel education, aiming at diversifying students' learning experience outside classroom and encouraging them to become an erudite and elegant person.

In 2003, a Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review (TLQPR) report spoke highly of its outstanding success in enhancing the quality of teaching. The same year saw another confirmation of its progress in promoting liberal arts education, with the quality of its teaching rated best among all the eight local tertiary institutions in a survey commissioned by the *Hong Kong Economic Journal Monthly*.

In 2006, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) conducted by the University Grants Committee placed Lingnan's research index in fourth position among Hong Kong's universities, just behind the three research-intensive universities. This reaffirms the professionalism of Lingnan's academics, because it underlines their commitment to research, as well as their dedication to cultivating good relationships with their students.

Professor Chan Yuk-Shee became the University's President in September 2007. To continue Lingnan's fine tradition, Professor Chan built more student hostels, provided more opportunities for students to go on overseas exchange and created a more internationalised campus.

Professor Leonard K Cheng became the University's President in September 2013. He has the vision to distinguish Lingnan's liberal arts education with the best of Chinese and western cultures, so that students can learn from the best of both worlds and become truly global

The close affinity of the campus and hostel helps to foster camaraderie among the students, and it helps to educate students in a holistic manner, as is the University's mission. In addition, it also nurtures a powerful sense of belonging, and inspires students' learning and thinking. Through the community life on campus, students will learn to respect the rights and opinions of others and to develop their interpersonal skills based on mutual respect and trust.

Lingnan's distinctive position in the higher education sector was further testified when *Forbes* named the University one of the "Top 10 Liberal Arts Colleges in Asia" in 2015. Following the release of the *Report of a Quality Audit of Lingnan University* by the Quality Assurance Council of the University Grants Committee in 2016 which confirmed Lingnan's commitment to achieving excellence through a liberal arts education and to providing a rich array of opportunities for the whole-person development of our students, the University launched the Strategic Plan 2016-2022, implementing a series of new initiatives in five strategic areas, namely (1) Academic Development and Research; (2) Student Development; (3) Campus Development; (4) Institutional Advancement; and (5) Sub-degree and Continuing Education.