

My on-campus days - Week 5 - Semester 3/8 7 October, 2021

Left stranded for a year on zoom, I am finally free to get out to campus - at a cost of 1 hour each side as I commute to and fro HKUST (at the time of writing, I just missed a bus in Diamond Hill after taking MTR back from Choi Hung, because there was like 100 people in queue for the Choi Hung minibus!).

Some things and people just fascinate me and things have been mostly great, although I still seem to struggle in adapting to the new learning environment.

If I am rate my on-campus days on a 1-10 scale, I would rate them a 7.5 - good place, good people, but stressful waiting, very long commute time and breakout difficulties.

Campus days

Finally some real faces rather than those robotic ones on zoom, or names without faces, or peeps sleeping during meetings (ok I'm just paying my tribute to one of my peers - it's a joke and I don't mean to offend haha). My recent peer interactions has made me feel a bit warmer - especially there were very few opportunities to mingle out of our existing social circles. Will my batch form closer bonds that extend beyond academics?

I still have hopes but there still don't seem to be someone eager to kickstart the fire - but I know I am not someone capable of maintaining the relationships of big groups nor someone interested in extensive socializing.

Here are the more 'concrete' experiences on campus I've had:

- More opportunities, particularly impromptu possibilities, e.g. re-connecting with quite a few peers on campus, sitting lessons, attending workshops.
- Meals are somewhat decently cheap with acceptable quality I go for \$11 or \$14 sandwiches for breakfast mostly (maybe with a drink at \$5.5 extra), typical \$25-40 lunch sets, and my dinner quality depends on whether I have events that day.
- Places - have been to many places like skywalk, computer labs and halls and now know a bit about on-campus logistics. Still look forward to knowing more.
- Collaborating with peers for projects - worked till 11pm at night on one occasion. Feels like the synergy could further push everyone up but it ultimately depends on the level of collaboration.

Lessons

Lecturer qualities really vary. Some lessons are so boring that I decide to skip them - even that I know I might not be able to digest the materials effectively myself.

- I believe my study load this semester should be barely manageable; there would be more stress and tension but probably they're at a level healthy for my development. In some sense, I just love belign competition.

- Sitting in classes (particularly the boring ones) sometimes does make me wonder why I am paying for a university degree. Sometimes TAs teach even better and have greater enthusiasm than lecturers!
- Possible valuable items - rapport with professors, collaboration with class/schoolmates, observation of class batches
- I did get broken (somewhat) grades by not studying enough last semester so I think I should take this reminder seriously this semester, especially when things are much harder.

Socializing

- I was heavily engaged in socializing in September. It seems inevitable that I have to expand my circle (unfortunately, wider, but not deeper at this stage) in order to succeed in career, and in some sense, academics.
- It was challenging for me to balance how much of myself should be shown in front of my classmates - too little feels fake, and too much feels crazy. I tried to be reasonably proactive and engaging in order to boost the morale of my batch - at least just to make things warmer.
- Observation:

Locals	Non-locals
More study-oriented	More proactive
More peer-initiated	More self-initiated
Less variation	Greater variation

My time

- Attempted to leave 90-minute breaks between lessons. Originally intended to use them for lunch/ tea breaks but decided to give up as canteens are usually overcrowded during peak time. Sometimes I would go to library for a short nap instead.
- Commute time used to reply to messages, summarize news or sleep. They are somewhat moments that I could utilize well in order to polish my work, studies or reflections.
- 1-2 hours a day reserved to my most important one(s) - base of my support to make me stay upright.
- Used night time to be crazy - e.g. writing passages like these, coming up with arguments, churning assignments when I feel it's a right time, making analyses.

What I should do?

- Reduce on-campus time - only for the more worthy initiatives
- Explore more corners, engage in more healthy initiatives, talk more to everyone
- Utilize the university resources well, e.g. gym, mentors career centre, faculty support, professor networks - adds value and inspiration to me
- Invest more time into my most cared ones