Core Unit 1: The transition from high school to university

**Lecture 1A: Common issues faced by students**

Hello everyone. Today I’ll be talking about a topic that I think will be very relevant to your lives- the transition from high school to university. By “transition” I mean the change from high school life to university life – which is not always easy and involves a number of challenges.

I will focus on three of them in this lecture. I’ll begin with the increased amount of unstructured time, then look at the changed student-teacher relationship. I’ll finish by talking about issues related to the type of academic work you are expected to do.

Ok, so I’ll start then by looking at the amount of unstructured time- which is time you have to organize for yourself. Now, high school students tend to have more scheduled lessons and more strictly planned and supervised academic activities. A 2022 study shows that Chinese teenagers spend on average 3 hours per day doing homework, which, in most cases, is assigned by their teacher. In contrast, university timetables usually have fewer mandatory classes. According to a website for a British university, TheUniGuide, a student in England can expect fewer than 10 hours of classes per week. That’s less than 2 hours of class per day! This means that the student has a whole lot of time that they must use wisely.

Organizing meaningful and useful activities for oneself can be quite a challenge. Some will spend too much time on activities they were not allowed to enjoy before, like playing video games. Others will get excited about being part of university clubs and societies and join too many of them. It’s great to take advantage of new freedom and opportunities, but there needs to be balance, since your main job is to study. It is natural to make mistakes with your time, but you do need to be careful. You want to avoid the consequences of missing important deadlines and not being prepared for crucial exams.

Right, I’ll now move on to another big challenge, which is the new type of relationship with teachers. Let’s look specifically at the difference between Chinese school teachers and their counterparts at foreign universities. A 2008 study describes the culture of respect and obedience in Chinese schools. This is of course good because the students feel close to their teachers as they can trust them and recognize their superiority. The research also points out, however, that because “the teacher is the upper, and the student is the lower”, many students are unwilling to express their ideas, to say openly what they think or even ask questions.

The western model in higher education, however, is quite different. Students are expected to be active partners in creating the classroom experience. They are not seen as just passive recipients, not some type of empty vessel to be filled with knowledge. Teachers expect opinions and they definitely welcome questions. These are seen as evidence that the student is actively trying to engage with and make sense of the subject.

So, as it is, high school students may see their teacher as someone who has authority, but also provides love and care and almost in the same way a parent would. And as they enter university, they may feel disappointed when they see that now they are as much responsible for creating a good classroom experience as their teacher is. Their success depends much more on themselves, as the teacher will usually only point them in the right direction instead of leading them while holding their hand.

Research done in 2021 at UNNC shows that when students arrive at the university, they think establishing a good relationship with their teacher is one of the most important aims in their first semester. However, by the time Semester 1 ends, this aim becomes one of the least relevant objectives. It could be argued that the students begin to understand that at university they must rely largely on themselves and be independent. This is a good lesson to learn – but the transition can be quite difficult.

OK, finally, I’ll now discuss a third big challenge faced by new university students, which is the new and more demanding types of academic tasks. High school was obviously extremely challenging- I’m sure you are all familiar with the pressures that come with all those exams. But university presents new academic challenges. First, there can be long assignments or projects that must be planned stage by stage- remember what I was saying earlier about managing your time?

Second is the need to engage in research. Unlike high school tests which require knowledge from set books, for academic assignments at university students must read extensively to understand the topic. This can be very challenging, especially when information comes from specialized journals which contain complex ideas and vocabulary.

Third is the requirement to form your own opinions and ideas on the topics you study. And these opinions have to be supported. You have to understand the research that you do, and organize it so that you can use it as evidence to support your ideas in a range of different forms- including exams, discussions, assignments and presentations.

So, to summarize then- as you can see, when a student starts university there are many challenges. The amount of unstructured time can be difficult to manage. Then, there is the different role of the teacher, which is often unfamiliar. Finally, the new types of academic tasks require new skills and intellectual effort. If all that sounds quite scary, then make sure you pay attention to the next lecture, in which my colleague will argue that these challenges are actually valuable opportunities that you should not be scared of but look forward to and appreciate.

But for now, that’s all – thank you.

大家好。今天我将谈论一个我认为与你们的生活非常相关的话题--从高中到大学的过渡。我所说的 "过渡 "是指从高中生活到大学生活的转变--这并不总是容易的，涉及到一些挑战。  
在这次讲座中，我将重点讨论其中的三个问题。我将从非结构化时间的增加开始，然后看一下改变了的学生和老师的关系。最后，我将谈一谈与你要做的学术工作类型有关的问题。  
好的，那么我先看一下非结构化时间的数量，也就是你必须为自己安排的时间。现在，高中生往往有更多预定的课程和更多严格计划和监督的学术活动。2022年的一项研究表明，中国青少年平均每天花3个小时做家庭作业，在大多数情况下，这些作业是由他们的老师分配的。相比之下，大学的时间表通常有较少的必修课。根据英国大学的一个网站TheUniGuide，英国的学生每周可以预期不到10小时的课程。也就是每天不到2个小时的课程！这意味着学生有一整年的时间来学习。这意味着学生有大量的时间，他们必须明智地使用。

为自己组织有意义和有用的活动可能是一个相当大的挑战。有些人会把太多的时间花在以前不允许他们享受的活动上，比如玩电子游戏。还有一些人会对参加大学俱乐部和社团感到兴奋，并加入了太多的俱乐部和社团。利用新的自由和机会是很好的，但需要有平衡，因为你的主要工作是学习。在时间上犯错是很自然的，但你确实需要小心。你要避免错过重要的最后期限和没有为关键考试做好准备的后果。  
对了，我现在要谈谈另一个大挑战，即与老师的新型关系。让我们具体看看中国学校的老师和外国大学的老师之间的区别。2008年的一项研究描述了中国学校中尊重和服从的文化。这当然是好事，因为学生们觉得和老师很亲近，因为他们可以信任他们，并且认识到他们的优越性。然而，研究也指出，由于 "老师是上，学生是下"，许多学生不愿意表达他们的想法，不愿意公开说出他们的想法，甚至不愿意提出问题。  
然而，西方高等教育的模式则完全不同。学生被期望成为创造课堂经验的积极伙伴。他们不被视为只是被动的接受者，而不是某种类型的空容器，要用知识来填充。教师期待学生发表意见，他们也绝对欢迎学生提问。这些问题被看作是学生积极尝试参与和理解该学科的证据。  
因此，就像现在这样，高中生可能把他们的老师看作是有权威的人，但也提供爱和关怀，几乎与父母的方式相同。而当他们进入大学后，当他们看到现在自己和老师一样有责任创造一个良好的课堂体验时，他们可能会感到失望。他们的成功更多地取决于他们自己，因为老师通常只会给他们指出正确的方向，而不是在握住他们的手时引导他们。  
2021年在UNNC进行的研究表明，当学生到达大学时，他们认为与老师建立良好的关系是他们第一学期最重要的目标之一。然而，到了第一学期结束时，这个目标就变成了最不相关的目标之一。可以说，学生们开始明白，在大学里，他们必须在很大程度上依靠自己，并且要独立。这是值得学习的一课--但过渡可能相当困难。  
好了，最后，我现在要讨论一下大学新生所面临的第三大挑战，即新的和更苛刻的学术任务类型。高中显然是极具挑战性的--我相信你们都熟悉所有那些考试带来的压力。但大学提出了新的学术挑战。首先，可能会有很长的作业或项目，必须按阶段进行规划--还记得我之前说过的管理时间吗？  
其次是需要参与研究。与高中考试要求从固定的书本中获取知识不同，大学的学术作业，学生必须广泛阅读以了解主题。这可能是非常具有挑战性的，特别是当信息来自包含复杂思想和词汇的专业期刊时。

第三是要求对你所研究的主题形成你自己的意见和想法。而这些意见必须得到支持。你必须理解你所做的研究，并将其组织起来，以便你能用它作为证据，在一系列不同的形式中支持你的观点--包括考试、讨论、作业和演讲。

因此，总结一下，正如你所看到的，当一个学生开始上大学时，有许多挑战。非结构化时间的数量可能难以管理。然后，还有教师的不同角色，这往往是不熟悉的。最后，新类型的学术任务需要新的技能和智力努力。如果所有这些听起来相当可怕，那么请确保你注意下一个讲座，我的同事将在讲座中论证这些挑战实际上是宝贵的机会，你不应该害怕，而是期待和欣赏。

但是现在，就这些了--谢谢你。