Studying Dentistry in Hong Kong

An introduction to being a dentist in Hong Kong & training at the HKU Faculty of Dentistry
Dear Reader

We hope you enjoy reading this brochure, which gives an introduction to dentistry in Asia’s World City of Hong Kong and training at the HKU Faculty of Dentistry in the purpose-built Prince Philip Dental Hospital.

The Faculty’s mission is “to serve the people of Hong Kong and the region by advancing their oral health and well-being through excellence in learning, discovery, patient care, and engagement”. Our institution is the only provider of university dental education in Hong Kong and is now considered to be the premier centre for dental education and training in Southeast Asia.

An outstanding feature of our undergraduate curriculum is the integration of problem-based learning to produce well-rounded dental graduates who are capable of critical thinking and life-long independent learning. In addition, our facilities are state-of-the-art and our teaching staff come from all over the globe and are highly recognised experts internationally in their respective disciplines.

We are confident of the high quality of education you will receive at the HKU Faculty of Dentistry. We look forward to sharing your future and helping you start your new career!

Prof Thomas Flemmig
Dean, Faculty of Dentistry
The University of Hong Kong

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Top 10 Reasons 
for Studying Dentistry in Hong Kong

The University of Hong Kong:
(1) Is ranked the **26th best university in the world** and **3rd best university in Asia** [Quacquarelli Symonds Rankings 2013-14]

The HKU Faculty of Dentistry:
(2) Has been delivering **world-class dental training** for more than 30 years
(3) Generates graduates who are keenly sought after and **very well compensated** by employers soon after graduation
(4) Provides a stimulating **problem-based learning** environment that encourages self-directed and life-long learning
(5) Comprises an **international team** of dedicated and internationally recognised teachers, researchers, and clinicians
(6) Has **outstanding** clinical, learning, and research facilities; undergraduate students are also well supported by the Dental Society of the HKU Students’ Union
(7) Provides **excellent support** from teams of dental surgery assistants, dental hygienists, and dental technicians
(8) Offers postgraduate programmes leading to **Internationally recognised** degrees and diplomas, the majority of which are accredited by the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine as part of the training pathways of the eight dental specialties in Hong Kong

Dentists in Hong Kong:
(9) Belong to a **well-respected health profession**, sharing a seat in the Medical Functional Constituency in the Legislative Council with medical colleagues; all registered dentists have full voting rights in that Constituency
(10) Have a **wide range of career paths** and can register and own an independent practice straight after graduation from the HKU Faculty of Dentistry
To be a dentist

Dentists deal with people, and their job involves diagnosing, preventing, and treating all aspects of oral diseases.

An ideal dentist is:
- Understanding, caring, and sympathetic to the needs of others
- Willing to serve the community
- Able to think, enquire, and process information logically
- Able to work with others in a team and be a team leader
- Able to communicate well with others
- Fit, with a healthy, cheerful disposition

Oral health matters

Dentists improve people’s oral health, which is important for general well-being because it affects:
- Speaking
- Biting, chewing, and eating
- Appearance and hence self-image and self-esteem
- Retention of healthy teeth and gums into old age, especially as improved living conditions and medical services mean that people are living longer than previous generations
- Quality of life, especially among individuals who are medically compromised
What a dentist does

Dentists enjoy the daily challenge of using sound scientific knowledge, modern techniques, and advanced equipment and materials to solve clinical problems.

Dentists:
• Diagnose, prevent, and treat aches and pains originating from jaws and teeth due to disease, injury, or malformation
• Improve a patient’s appearance via cosmetic dental procedures
• Perform surgical procedures such as metal implants, tissue grafts, and extractions
• Educate patients to better care for their teeth and prevent dental and oral diseases

In addition, dentists can:
• Teach future dentists and dental professionals
• Perform research to improve dental and oral health, and develop new treatments

The dental team

The dentist is the leader of a team of dental professionals, which may comprise:
• Dental hygienists
• Dental therapists
• Dental surgery assistants
• Dental technicians
Recent advances

Thanks to advances in technology and understanding of disease mechanisms, dentistry has evolved quickly, and previously hopeless dental cases can now be rehabilitated by sophisticated techniques and advanced materials.

Some examples of advances in dentistry are as follows:

- Fillings can be tooth-coloured
- Crowns, bridges, and dentures can restore or replace damaged or missing teeth
- Teeth that previously would have needed extraction can now be saved with root canal therapy
- Crooked or crowded teeth can be corrected by orthodontic (tooth-straightening) treatment
- Bad breath and gum diseases can be prevented and treated

Facial appearance can also be greatly improved by the following procedures:

- Tooth restoration
- Periodontics (care for tissues around teeth)
- Orthodontics (tooth-straightening), and/or
- Oral and maxillofacial (jaw and face) surgery
Becoming a Dentist in Hong Kong

Studying at the HKU Faculty of Dentistry

The Faculty of Dentistry at The University of Hong Kong is the premier dental school in Southeast Asia and the only institution in Hong Kong that provides undergraduate and postgraduate dental degrees. The Faculty was established in 1982 and is located in the Prince Philip Dental Hospital in Sai Ying Pun on Hong Kong Island.

The undergraduate intake is about 50 each year, and the degree of Bachelor of Dental Surgery (HK) is recognised internationally and by the Dental Council of Hong Kong, the independent local authority with full legal status that looks after the registration of dentists and monitors their practice.

From the academic year 2013-14 onwards, the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (HK) programme for new cohorts lasts 6 years. Local students are usually considered for entry on the basis of their application, interview performance, and results in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education [HKDSE] Examination.
Entry requirements

From 2013-14, local candidates applying for admission to the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (HK) programme on the strength of HKDSE Examination results need to gain Level 4 or above in English; Level 3 or above in Mathematics and Liberal Studies; and one Elective Subject at Level 3 or above from the following: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Combined Science, or Integrated Science.

Candidates who are not current students in the mainstream schools in Hong Kong and who are not applying for admission on the strength of HKDSE Examination results should apply through the Non-JUPAS Admissions Scheme.

For University entrance requirements for both JUPAS and Non-JUPAS modes can be viewed at <http://www.als.hku.hk/admission>.

The Faculty’s webpage for prospective undergraduate students can be found at <http://facdent.hku.hk/learning/ug_info.html>.

For specific queries on undergraduate admission to the HKU Faculty of Dentistry, please e-mail <dental@hku.hk>.
The undergraduate dental degree

The curriculum for the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (HK) degree at the HKU Faculty of Dentistry underwent a complete redesign in 1998 so that graduates are well suited to handle evolving demands on the dental profession in Hong Kong. Since 2012-13, and as a result of major academic restructuring in the secondary and tertiary education sectors in Hong Kong, the BDS curriculum is now 6 years in duration, although in parallel, the 5-year curriculum is still being offered, with the last student intake to that curriculum admitted in 2012-13.

Problem-based learning

The undergraduate degree curriculum at the HKU Faculty of Dentistry is both learning-centred and student-centred, and encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning.

In addition to learning practical clinic skills, students take part in problem-based learning tutorials. In these small-group tutorials, students discuss a series of structured, integrated, and interesting dental “problems” to allow them to be exposed to the main elements of biomedical, behavioural, social, and clinical sciences that underpin dental surgery. This problem-based learning method makes it easier to acquire and retain knowledge, instils life-long learning habits, and fosters teamwork skills, all attributes of a good dentist.
Degree curriculum outline

Students will learn:

- Biomedical, behavioural, social, and clinical sciences underlying oral diseases and oral disorders
- Prevention, clinical features, and management of oral diseases
- Diagnostic, operative (manual), interpersonal, and communication skills to allow students to develop into competent dental practitioners

Learning environment

Multidisciplinary learning takes place at the HKU Faculty of Dentistry in the Prince Philip Dental Hospital, which houses a state-of-the-art Simulation Laboratory and a Haptics Unit that together allow students to practise dental procedures in a virtual-reality setting, a Problem-based Learning Suite equipped with interactive whiteboards, state-of-the-art patient clinics, and Asia’s top specialist dental library. Students also benefit from the latest video and computer-assisted design and manufacturing technology.

Some learning occurs at other clinics and venues in Hong Kong, including the University Departments of Medicine and Surgery. Final-year students have an opportunity to spend time in a dental school abroad.
Dental Careers in Hong Kong

Career prospects

Dentistry is a well-recognised health profession in Hong Kong, and dental graduates command the benefits of a high professional status as well as a stable, above-average income. In 2012, the average total monthly income of fresh graduates of the HKU Faculty of Dentistry was HK$33,575, compared with the University average of HK$19,598.

Dental graduates from the HKU Faculty of Dentistry normally secure gainful employment in the field of dentistry shortly after graduation. In 2012, all Bachelor of Dental Surgery (HK) graduates found jobs or took up further studies within the first 6 months of graduation. [Data from Careers and Placement, HKU Centre of Development and Resources for Students, <www.hku.hk/cepc/survey/ges>.

Career paths

A degree in dentistry can open various career paths. Graduates can pursue any of the following careers:

- Private general dental practice
- Hospital dentistry
- Government dental service
- Institutional general practice
- Specialist practice
- University teaching and research

Some career paths require further studies. Dentists wanting to practise abroad may need to pass special examinations abroad; those who trained abroad but want to work in Hong Kong need to pass Dental Council of Hong Kong examinations.
Private general dental practice

Most dental graduates go into private general dental practice. This career avenue offers:

- Flexibility
- The opportunity to practise almost all aspects of dentistry
- The choice to practise alone or to practise in partnership with other dentists
- The chance to be an associate of other private dentists and, after a few years, to become a partner or set up a new clinic

Bank loans to establish private clinics are usually not difficult to secure, and equipment can be leased or purchased in instalments. The Hong Kong Housing Authority provides clinic space for doctors and dentists in every public housing estate.

If a private dentist offers high-quality care and is kind to patients of all ages from all backgrounds, a successful practice is almost assured. He or she must also have:

- Good management skills
- Financial literacy
- A good work ethic, enthusiasm, and business efficiency

Some dentists choose to practise part-time rather than full-time. Furthermore, an individual practitioner can choose to devote a large part of working time to particular areas of interest.
Hospital dentistry

Hospital dentistry may suit the tastes of those who want the support and career structure of a large organisation.

Although a hospital dentist may not treat many patients a day, patients’ problems are likely to be more complicated than those seen in general practice. In a hospital, a dentist:

• Is part of a much larger team
• Has access to operating theatre facilities
• Has contact with specialists from other disciplines
• May see patients with unusual medical conditions, developmental abnormalities, and complex facial injuries, who are referred by other dentists or doctors

Much hospital work is highly specialised. Working hours may be quite long and a hospital dentist may be “on call”. However, hospital work is interesting and satisfying. Also, because posts are salaried, hospital dentists do not face financial pressures that exist in private practices.

Most hospital dentists in Hong Kong work in the Prince Philip Dental Hospital (the only dental hospital in Hong Kong) or in the maxillofacial and dental units of general hospitals around the city.
Government dental service

More than 200 dentists are employed by the Hong Kong Department of Health. Government dental officers work in the following services:

- Government dental clinics, providing general oral health care to civil servants and eligible dependants; some clinics also provide limited emergency dental care service to the general public
- Maxillofacial and dental units of public hospitals, providing services to in-patients
- School dental service clinics, providing dental care to primary school students, and supervising dental therapists who offer dental care in the School Dental Care Service
- Oral Health Education Unit, promoting oral health awareness in the community

Institutional general practice

Various organisations, including large companies and religious bodies, have dental clinics to provide dental treatment for employees, members, and the general public. Dentists working in these institutions are usually salaried, and their work is similar to that of private dentists.
Specialist practice

Some dentists choose to specialise in particular areas of interest in dentistry. Different specialist training pathways are recognised by the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine. Dentists who wish to become recognised as specialists have to obtain a postgraduate degree or qualification and have to undertake advanced training in the specialty concerned.

Specialists can work in private practice or be employed in the government dental service, in hospitals, or in universities.

University teaching and research

Research is usually combined with teaching in university dental schools and offers the opportunity to pursue particular areas of interest in greater detail. The range of topics is very broad, from the study of cell biochemistry to the study of dental materials and development of new treatment strategies.

By obtaining higher degrees and advanced clinical qualifications and by committing to teaching and research, an enthusiastic dentist may progress through the academic ranks to become a university professor.
Further studies

There are many opportunities for further studies in dentistry, both in Hong Kong and abroad.

Some programmes are set up for dentists who wish to improve their skills and knowledge while continuing to practise as general dentists. And some programmes are designed for dentists aspiring to become specialist practitioners, dental teachers, or researchers.

The HKU Faculty of Dentistry offers research degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy, as well as taught postgraduate degree and diploma programmes, including the following:

- Master of Science (programmes in a number of dental disciplines)
- Master of Dental Surgery (programmes in most dental subjects)
- Advanced Diploma (programmes in major dental disciplines)

Full details can be found at the Faculty website at: <http://facdent.hku.hk>.
The Student Experience

“Dentistry has always had a strong impact on me, both in terms of being mentally challenging, and also as a ‘hands-on’ profession. The BDS programme has prepared me well for the challenges of being a dentist. On top of clinical training, problem-based learning has enabled me to develop a host of transferable skills for life-long learning, particularly self-study, communication, group work, and organisation.”

—Dr Mei-man Chong, BDS 2008

“To me, the essence of university education does not lie in learning as many hard facts as possible, but learning how to learn on my own. The HKU Faculty of Dentistry did a great job in developing me as a life-long learner. After all, dentistry is ever-changing and the learning never stops.”

—Dr Ian Lai, BDS 2009

“Through the BDS degree, I acquired good management skills, clinical techniques, and know-how to become a good dentist. The programme also changed me a lot and trained me to be more confident and patient. In the future, I will try my best to help people in need and improve their quality of life.”

—Dr Iris C Kei, BDS 2010

“Problem-based learning in the BDS programme at the HKU Faculty of Dentistry has equipped me to be a self-motivated life-long learner. It has made learning a habit, which is very important for dentists to be able to improve the quality of patient care in this quickly advancing dental world.”

—Dr Keith MY Leung, BDS 2011
Hong Kong career websites:

- Careers and Placement, HKU Centre of Development and Resources for Students
  <http://cedars.hku.hk/sections/careersplacement/index.php>
- Human Resources of HKU
  <http://jobs.hku.hk>
- HKU Dental Alumni Association, Alumni Jobsite
  <http://facdent.hku.hk/hkudaa/jobsite.html>
- JobsDB in Hong Kong
  <http://hk.jobsdb.com/hk>
- South China Morning Post Classified Post
  <http://www.classifiedpost.com>

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