Alternative Pathways in Global Education: Insights from Hong Kong

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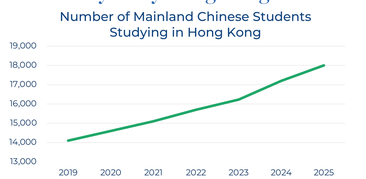
Background

Using Hong Kong as a case study, this poster examines trends in Chinese student mobility, including institutional support, bilingual learning, regional career options, and scholarships, offering insights for U.S. and global institutions to refine international recruitment strategies.

Case Study: Why Hong Kong?



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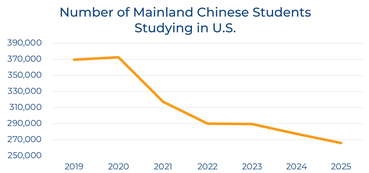

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- Regional education hub within Asia
- Bilingual academic environment
- Regional career access for employment
- High global university rankings

- Increasing geopolitical tensions
- Visa policy concerns
- Rising education costs
- Safety concerns

Hong Kong Universities among Top 50 in QS Global Ranking (2025):

1. Massachusetts Institute of Technology
2. Imperial College London
3. University of Oxford

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13. University of Melbourne

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17. University of Hong Kong

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25. University of Toronto

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36. Chinese University of Hong Kong

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43. New York University

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47. Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

...

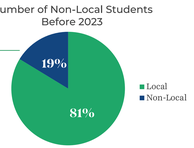
50. University of Amsterdam

? Are students from mainland China considered "local students" in Hong Kong?

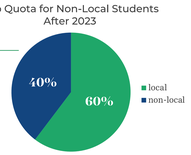
Mainland China and Hong Kong have different residency systems and border and travel documents. Since mainland students generally do not hold Hong Kong identity cards, they are classified as ***non-local students*** when studying in Hong Kong.

Expansion of Non-Local Undergraduate Enrollment in Hong Kong Universities

Before 2023, around 15,000 out of 76,000 seats were held by non-local students.



After 2023, the government increased the non-local admission quota to **40%**, aiming to have over 30,000 out of 76,000 seats for non-local students.



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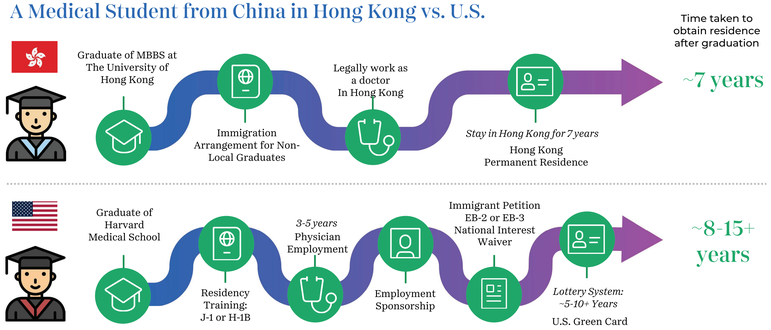
Pathways to Permanent Residence:
A Medical Student from China in Hong Kong vs. U.S.



Scholarship Opportunities for Mainland Students

Comparison Category		Hong Kong Universities	United States Universities
Admission Exams Used		• **Gaokao** *or* A-level *or* SAT/ACT • Some universities have **direct Gaokao admissions**	• SAT/ACT ***plus*** English tests (TOEFL *or* IELTS) • GRE/GMAT for some graduate programs, ***plus*** English tests (TOEFL *or* IELTS)
Scholarship Simplicity		• Merit-based entrance scholarships tied to exam results (e.g., Gaokao or IB) • Directly linked to offers of admission → **Automatically considered**	• **Separate applications** → Must search and apply separately • Rely on department funding or assistantships at graduate level
Competitiveness		• Highly competitive • **Score-based** → Gaokao scores may trigger scholarships automatically	• Highly competitive • **Holistic considerations:** Essays, extracurriculars, recommendations, nominations, etc.
Funding Coverage		• Some awards cover **full tuition** and living allowances • Some awards have no quota cap	• Most scholarships are **partial** tuition reductions • Full funding is more common for PhD candidates
Examples	**Engineering**	• **HKU** (University of Hong Kong) **entrance scholarship** by University of Hong Kong – Faculty of Engineering	• **Robertson Scholars Leadership Program** by Duke University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
	Business	• **CUHK** (Chinese University of Hong Kong) **admission scholarship for international students** by Chinese University of Hong Kong – Business School	• **Ross BBA Scholarships** by University of Michigan – Ann Arbor – Ross School of Business

Career and Internship Opportunities for Mainland Students

Comparison Category		Hong Kong Universities	United States Universities
Internship Authorization		• Internships are usually **allowed during study** • Many programs include structured internship components	• Must apply for **CPT** (Curricular Practical Training) to work during study • Approval depends on program structure
Postgraduate Work		• Can apply for **IANG** (Immigration Arrangement for Non-local Graduates) visa to stay and work for 7 years • **Do not need** employer sponsorship	• Use **OPT** (Optional Practical Training) after graduation • Limited duration → 12 months; STEM up to 36 months
Industry and Government Connections		• Universities **maintain strong ties with public institutions,** both government or private in Hong Kong and mainland China	• Universities **have extensive partnerships with global corporations**, research labs, and major companies
Career Path after Graduation		• Often enter Hong Kong industries or Mainland China companies → Benefit from **regional networks** and **familiarity** with Mainland students	• Employment depends more on **employer sponsorship** and **visa availability** → **Uncertain career path** for international graduates
Examples	**Medicine**	• Medical graduates often enter **Hong Kong public hospital residency system** • Dentistry graduates often work in **public clinics** or **Hong Kong Department of Health**	• Dental pathways extremely limited for international students after graduation • **Licensing barriers and limited school admissions**
	Science and Engineering	• Engineering and science students intern with Hong Kong and Mainland tech firms: **MTR, Tencent, Huawei,** etc.	• Business and tech internships are common but **globally competitive** and with **visa concerns** • Engineering internships **require CPT** approval

Strategic Insights into U.S. and Global Institutions

U.S. institutions can apply the following recruitment strategies:

- **Emphasize regional career mobility**
  Students increasingly prioritize employment prospects after graduation. Institutions should clearly communicate career pathways, such as local or international industry connections and government organizations, for non-local students.
- **Cross-border internships**
  Consider including cross-border organization partnerships and organizations across different U.S. states, in Canada, and worldwide. Institutions should clearly communicate the diverse career pathways and industry connections available to support non-local students.
- **Promote English language prep courses**
  Offer English language classes before starting the semester. They should be open to beginners, who should not need to meet any prerequisites to enroll. This will allow students who are not academically strong but who do not meet the English admission requirement an opportunity to improve their English before they begin their main studies.
- **Flexible curriculum design**
  Consider more variety among previous studies offered as transfer credits, such as courses like Physical Education or Lab Sciences.
- **Offer transparent scholarship structures**
  Consider "merit-based" scholarship. Offer partial or full tuition, no quota limitations, that stay within the institutions' financial budget, while increasing enrollment interest.
- **Hybrid teaching models**
  Explore more flexible hybrid teaching models for international students who are temporarily outside the U.S. While F-1 visa regulations limit the number of online courses students may take while living in the U.S., universities could expand options for remote participation when students return home temporarily due to family or emergency situations.
- **Expand alumni networks in China**
  Form alumni networks in China with regular activities and engagements can help promote global institutions locally.
- **Industry partnerships**
  Institutions with connections to government and working opportunities in public sectors such as hospitals, elderly care centers, or science centers, can increase students' confidence in getting employment offers after graduation.
- **Develop regional campus partnerships**
  By developing more joint- and dual-degree programs to study and intern in both the U.S. and China, students can gain more work experience in the U.S. and have more time to forge career connections.
- **Family engagement communication**
  Provide student mental health counseling in Chinese and provide accommodation or travel suggestions for short-term family visits.

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