Congratulations to Graduate House!

“Being a ‘resident’ of Graduate House brings back lots of memories of my hall life in the United Kingdom almost two decades ago. I can still remember having fire alarms almost every fortnight, my ice cream being half-eaten by someone, residents of the entire floor choking and having to evacuate when my hall mates experimented with their pepper corn chicken stir fry, etc. Yet these did not stop me from making friends with people living there as they had given me so much joy and support.

With 200 postgraduate students from all around the world, Graduate House can be regarded as the most international hall of residence in Hong Kong, if not in Asia Pacific, for scholars. It is encouraging to note that so many formal and informal activities have been organised over the years to promote cultural and research exchange through which residents’ relationship and trust can be built upon. I strongly believe you do not only earn your degree after your graduation but also the friendships that will last forever.

I must say I am so honoured to be the Master and a “resident” of Graduate House, and I am indeed so proud of the achievements of the House over the last decade, which is primarily due to the unfailing effort of the three ex-Masters, the staff and the residents. While Graduate House remains to be the most preferred choice of residence for HKU postgraduates, I sincerely hope you will join me spreading the fragrance of Graduate House far and ever.”

------- Dr. Thomas S. T. Ng, Current Master of Graduate House

“I would like to congratulate Graduate House for your 10th anniversary celebration. Having been the Master for the last six and a half years, I, together with members of my family, in particular my three sons who were born during this period, have personally grown up with the House. We cherish our memory of the people we met, the place we lived and of course the fellowship that we shared with the students and staff at the House. Ten years is only the beginning of the milestone of the history that Graduate House is going to make for both the University and the Hong Kong community.”

------- Prof. Desmond Hui, Master of Graduate House (2001-2007)
“Thanks to the vision of those who planned Graduate House and the generosity of the Hong Kong Jockey Club, we now have a superb setting for graduate students from all over the world to make new friends and exchange ideas. Those who have experienced the special atmosphere of Graduate House, including myself, will always remember it with fondness and gratitude.”

------- Prof. B. M. Y. Cheung, Master of Graduate House (1999–2001)

The Tutor Fellowship system in Graduate House began in 2002. Tutor Fellows are University teachers nominated by individual faculty and appointed by the Graduate House Committee of Management to serve as academic and activity co-ordinators for residents of Graduate House under their own faculties. In celebration of the 10th Anniversary of Graduate House, our tutor fellows have organised a series of gatherings with residents of different faculties to exchange ideas.

“Although I was appointed to be a Tutor Fellow not long ago, I’ve still had the valuable opportunity to exchange my views with Arts postgraduates. Besides discussion on their research projects, we also talked about daily life matters such as dormitory and food, as well as personal matters such as friendship and value of
life. Graduate House serves as a communication platform for postgraduate students from all around the world. I hope that after your graduation, you would not only have benefited academically, but you would also have grown to be a more mature person."

-------Dr. C. M. Si, Tutor Fellow, Faculty of Arts

"Being a small faculty, we have a single digit number of residents staying in Graduate House. For the last 3 years, Dr. Shum Mei Har (Fellow of the Faculty of Medicine) and I co-hosted both medical and dental Graduate House residents in our annual meeting with a lot of fun. Congratulations Graduate House for 10th year anniversary."

------- Dr. H. K. Yip, Tutor Fellow, Faculty of Dentistry

“It has been my great pleasure to be a Tutor Fellow of Graduate House. The Tutor-Fellow programme has provided a perfect conduit through which students and staff can go beyond the formal boundaries of supervision and has been very much a part of Graduate House's development into a vibrant, intellectual, social and cultural hub for postgraduates. I would like to wish Graduate House a very Happy 10th Anniversary."

------- Dr. A. McManus, Tutor Fellow, Faculty of Education

“My hearty congratulations to Graduate House for its 10th anniversary. I am pleased to have been associated with GH as a tutor fellow for nearly a decade and to witness its unsurpassed environment for postgraduate students of The University of Hong Kong."

------- Prof. T. H. Tse, Tutor Fellow, Faculty of Computer Science

“I have fond memory of the kaleidoscope of activities I took part in the Graduate House: Friday night movies, art exhibitions, concerts, talks and the high table dinners; also of the interesting people I met. I’ve been having a great time as part of the family. I wish the residents of the Graduate House continue to have a much enriched experience."

------- Dr. M. H. Sham, Tutor Fellow, Faculty of Medicine

“I joined Graduate House as a Resident Fellow since 2002. Time flies and Graduate House has become my home for the past 6 years!!

Together with the residents, we lived through the hard time during SARS, organised two Chinese Concerts, chatted our way through the Classical Music with
Resident Fellows Nights and published the unique Graduate House Newsletters. All these activities have made my life very colourful and meaningful.

Now that we are celebrating the 10th Anniversary of Graduate House, may I wish all the Graduate House Alumni and residents all the best for the future. I hope your time with Graduate House has been fruitful and please treasure the very fond memories of this place – our place!”

------ Dr. Helen Law, Resident Fellow

“Being a tutor of Graduate House for just a month has already expanded my horizons in various aspects. In Graduate House, not just the view of trees and chirping birds outside my window refreshes my mind every day, the residents of Graduate House I meet every day really broaden my knowledge of the world. Graduate House is not just a place to live but also a place where you meet people from diverse backgrounds. Graduate House definitely is not the most glamorous place, but surely it will become part of the graduates’ memories of their postgraduate life.”
I am glad to have a chance to be the Resident Tutor at Graduate House. Staying here for just a month, I am already deeply impressed by the versatile and talented postgraduate students. I truly believe our residents will be the future leaders in their fields and would definitely influence the world positively. I hope that I will be able to share with you the joyful, stressful, or even silly moments you encounter in the coming year."

------ Dr. Jack Wong Chun Ming, Resident Tutor

香港大学研究生堂十周年志庆

宿舍大楼 十载繁盛 往来学子无白丁

大门宏开 各方贤能 和谐荟萃谊长青

------ 高一锋题 (现任学生代表) 二零零八年四月于香江

------ Mr. Sebastian KO, Current Student Representative

PCLL, Faculty of Law

“I hope Graduate House will go on to become a foster ground for people from different nationalities to share their cultures, thoughts and friendship!

I miss my time at Graduate House because it provided a very comfortable place for me to study and it provides good services to its residents. I have many memories there of my personal growth”

------ Ma Yee Ki, Past Resident
Graduate House was designed by Rocco YIM, a graduate of the Department of Architecture at HKU. Mr. YIM has established himself as one of the best designers in Hong Kong. Designed in 1984 and completed in March 1998, Graduate House was awarded a prize by the Hong Kong Institute of Architects – the top honour of a Silver Medal, the highest recognition of architectural design excellence by the Institute. Our home has become a landmark in Hong Kong.

The building is located on a very difficult site as it sits across a picturesque valley with a number of beautiful and mature trees that were to be retained, and a challenging slope. By skilfully handling building levels and orientation, Mr. YIM managed to keep the original vegetation and trees on the site and turned them into a feature of the design. The building is connected to the main campus through the steep slope to the upper access road University Drive. Alongside the building is a series of terraces serving as the visual and physical extension of the foyer and circulation spaces inside.

Graduate House, a multifunctional academic building, consists of three parts: a dormitory for 210 postgraduate students, an amenities centre for the whole student body, and a conference centre for the public. The conference centre – containing Wang Gungwu Lecture Hall, four seminar rooms and a multi-purpose room – is the part nearest to the main campus. The amenities centre consists of several multi-purpose rooms, and study facilities. The student hostel consists of one nine- and one 18-floor block. The nine-floor block is located on the top of the amenities centre, and the other block, named after the Hong Kong Jockey Club, is the highest part of the building, with 18 stories in total, 11 of which make up the residential block above the main entrance to the dormitory.

The building’s configuration evolves beautifully from the surrounding natural features and from the functional requirements for different uses. The overall ambience of the building is subdued, yet bright and elegant, suitable for the functions it holds. It is faced externally with coloured ceramic tiles and painted with different shades of grey. The foyer and other internal public spaces are made from reconstituted marble tiles and painted concrete. Doors and balustrades are painted mostly in shades of grey and blue.
Facing south, the Jockey Club wing optimises exposure to the sun, cross-ventilation of the rooms, and a view to the mountain with single-loaded corridors. It is connected with the lower residential block by a glass intermediate zone which is developed into double-storied student lounges, where residents can cook, watch TV, and chat with one another. The rooms are arranged with single-loaded corridors. Both walls on the corridor side of the residential blocks are relatively solid with narrow vertical windows to minimise the heat gain. All rooms are well-equipped and endowed with good views of either the campus and harbour or of the hill on the other side. But the shared bathroom doors and walls between the bedrooms have low sound insulation, which has brought inconveniences to some residents.

Rocco YIM’s Explanation of His Graduate House Design

“The design’s main aim is to merge the campus into the architecture and to create a green environment both within and without the building envelope. More specifically, the following strategies were adopted:

The hostel block is orientated to face south and north-east, with narrow, solid facades and circulation elements as buffets to face east and west, thus achieving appropriate solar insulation and respecting the existing campus planning axes.

The footprint of the hostel block is carefully configured to facilitate single-loaded corridors for possible cross-ventilation across all bedrooms as well as maximum view and natural lighting for the double-volume communal lounges.

The existing natural features on site such as the nullah, the valley and the trees are preserved and a more formal landscaped route is created to flank the natural terrain as a green "connector space" for daily commuters from the campus centre to the other campus buildings up the slope.
A contiguous series of semi-private/semi-public spaces are created at the building’s base to unite the architecture... spaces are intentionally ambiguous and elastic, serving at once as circulation, lobby, lounge, prefunction and a visual extension of the landscaped terraces outside...”

SU Ping, PhD Yr 1
Department of English, Faculty of Arts

Popular Features of Graduate House

What makes Graduate House the top choice for students?

1. Unique scenic location — Graduate House faces Victoria Harbour on one side and a mountain on the other, and is a short distance to any building on campus

2. Best design — the highest recognition of architectural design excellence by the Hong Kong Institute of Architects in 1998

3. Versatile facilities — You can study, entertain, do physical exercise, cook, and do other activities

4. Qualified management — There are experienced full-time employees and enthusiastic committee members and volunteers

5. Good internal environment — Although the bedrooms are tranquil, the common rooms are buzzing with interesting stories

6. International communications — You can learn about different cultures from your neighbours, and can learn and practice other languages with them too

7. Diverse community — People from various fields and from every faculty of the University of Hong Kong live at Graduate House

8. Warm-hearted staff — They can provide practical help for your everyday life

9. Strong education background — Residents are Master and PhD students

10. Colorful activities — Many events are held regularly to enrich the lives and experiences of the residents

ZHENG Tianhang, PhD Yr 2
Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Faculty of Engineering
The interview is originally scheduled to take place at Joseph’s on P3, Graduate House. But chance has it that the entire restaurant is booked for the day. Fortunately, Graduate House is happily situated in the part of the university campus where another premium restaurant is within easy walking distance, so we move to our neighbour’s canteen, the Dining Room of Sir Robert Black College.

We arrive well before the restaurant begins to serve lunch. Our waiter ushers us to a table at the back of the room, then quietly withdraws after seeing that we are content with the seating and the drinks.

Sitting in front of your correspondent are two very well-known personalities of Graduate House. Amy (Amy Ho) lives at Graduate House and most of the residents must know her by face if not by name. Mr. Yeung (Yeung Hung-Biu), one of our watchmen, is among the few persons in Graduate House who have the privilege to have a name plate sitting on their desk. Amy and Mr. Yeung both started working here since April 1998, and have made a decade-long series of contributions to the welfare of the Graduate House community.

**Floods and other disasters**

The reader may have read elsewhere in this publication about the architectural success of Graduate House, for which the designers were awarded the silver medal from the Hong Kong Institute of Architects in 1999. Perhaps it is therefore surprising to learn that in the very first years, flooding and false alarm—which were by no means the direct result of defects in design but rather due to delays in facility installation—frequently threw GH into havoc. Mr. Yeung and Amy had very unpleasant experiences in unplugging blocked pipes, draining flooded corridors and rooms, and rescuing students’ belongings from surging inundation. They found themselves battling with the inclement weather on many a stormy night. These natural hazards were not helped by the post-construction chaos. “It was a time when the lower floors were impossible to navigate with building materials scattered everywhere. Once I got lost on P6 and couldn’t find the way out!” relates the veteran resident of GH.

Surely, there were better things to remember than dripping carpets and nocturnal false alarms? Even when the place was barely functional, a close-knit, friendly community soon emerged. Residents at GH have always found Amy, Mr. Yeung,
and many of their colleagues not only reliable professionally but also friends who can be trusted. “I have been invited to several weddings of past GH residents already,” says Amy. “Although I am unable to account for their particular favour, I do say with certainty that my friendships with the students living here are very deep and genuine.” As the occupant of P103, she even allowed a group of architecture students to use her living room as their studio. She definitely enjoys outings, and frequently joins residents for meals outside campus—“one time we ventured as far as Lan Kwai Fong!”

The clock strikes 12:30, and our discreet waiter returns with a menu. The lunch set on offer seems hearty with sirloin steak as the main course. Quite predictably, Mr. Yeung goes for steak. As someone who doesn’t eat beef, I am at first worried about appearing as one of those fastidious middle-class academicians having strange dietary notions if I ask them to prepare something else for the main course. Fortunately, all such silly concerns are dispelled when Amy requests the vegetarian option. She is readily obliged. I have fared rather well then to just ask our very good waiter to replace the steak with fish fillet.

**Exemplar of mastership**

Our entrées arrive moments later. Freshly chopped fruits and vegetables seem to go very well with cold cuts; better though if the sauce is less thick. As we dig into our salads, we move our discussion to the long list of masters who have served our community. Amy remembers very fondly the mastership of Dr. Desmond Hui (2001-2008), who in her estimation, was an exceptional leader as well as a good friend. “I miss Dr. Hui’s children, in particular Ronnie, the youngest of his sons. He was very attached to me and would hold my hand when he dropped by the office.” Mr. Yeung also speaks very highly of the former master, who in his regard is one of the best Graduate House has ever had. “He treated everybody as an equal and would respect you wherever you are in the bureaucracy, high or low.” The master’s wife, Mrs. Monica Hui, was equally amiable, and often shared with Amy and Mr. Yeung stories from Taiwan where she grew up.

Dr. Hui’s achievement is possibly founded upon an active approach to management and his dedication to the welfare of students and staff members alike. His openness and willingness to stay involved inspired those who worked for him. That enabled his professional relationships with the staff to mature into something altogether deeper and more personal. That explains why he was able to command so much respect and why things were on average done efficiently and fairly under his leadership.

**Life’s trials and adversities**

Our next course gives neither surprise nor disappointment. Mr. Yeung gets a nice cut of steak and Amy a plateful of sautéed asparagus. My fish fillet is rather dull in comparison. “Is the dish of your liking, sir?” inquires the waiter, perhaps alarmed by my involuntary forlorn look. “It is very fine, thank you” is my polite reply.
As we operate our forks and knives on our mains, the conversation makes a poignant turn to their family lives. Both have seen much hardship and faced tests of adversity in all stages of their life. Amy raised her daughter as a single mother. Her daughter now works to support the family, but it remains a stressful task for the two to make ends meet. Mr. Yeung is a father of a 15-year old son studying in secondary school. “It is very hard to support a young son as a father of my age,” says the anxious father. “It would be very unfair to the child if one deprives him of his justified share of society and fun because the family does not have the means to support him. Yet the difficulties are very real.”

The tone in which these stories are told suggests a philosophical approach to life that few understand except those who have really lived one. Age may have taken away some of their vigour, but their devotion to both family and work is as ardent as ever. “I know exactly who sleeps late and who leaves early,” Amy says. “This allows me to time my work in a way that corresponds with everyone’s rest and work schedule.” “I am also driven by my own motivation to perform better,” says Mr. Yeung in agreement. “I always complete my tasks and work up to the expectations the residents have of me.”

I have given up on my fish and my fellow diners are finishing their own dishes. “We are very glad that Graduate House is now truly a settled community, with many of our past residents becoming important persons in their own countries.” Working at Graduate House is like raising a child. There is not much material gain from the effort, but one’s maternal sensibility is very likely moved by the development of the place to which he or she is professionally as well as emotionally attached.

Our lunch concludes with crêpes au chocolat, and it is at this point that the conversation moves back to less serious subjects. Amy informs the author that the best time to do laundry is Sunday afternoon. It is best also to leave GH before 9am as most people choose to depart at that hour of the day.

We skipped tea because it was time for Amy to return for work. “First things first.” Mr. Yeung is kind enough to find me the past issues of the hall’s newsletter. “I hope you will find them useful in preparing the article.” When they are around, help seems to come automatically even without our asking for it.

So there, two valuable friends whom we can always trust and rely on.

Kwannok Norbert CHAN, MPhil Yr 1
Department of Politics and Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences
What Are We Studying?

A research profile of Graduate House

Graduate House houses almost two hundred postgraduate researchers and taught masters degree candidates. Our student population comprises a large number of graduates from mainland China, smaller representations from North America and Europe, as well as students from South and Southeast Asia, Australia and elsewhere in the world, including our host Hong Kong. Such diversity in the backgrounds of our researchers translates into a worldly perspective on the subjects of our research, which span from architecture to politics, philosophy to electrical engineering, education to nano-technology.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that this cohort of minds, originating from all around the globe, is a fount of intellectual and creative thinking in which new ideas are kindled and old ones scrutinised. So when we are not congregating in the common room, delighting in the student canteens or negotiating bathroom access with our neighbours, but running instead the cerebral marathons that we signed ourselves up for at the University of Hong Kong, what is it we are studying?

Well, for some, it’s…

…Brain Regeneration

YUAN Ti-Fei works on brain regeneration. Following on from previous work in his laboratory using nano-materials (self-assembly peptides) to create nano-scaffolds that permit nerve regrowth after brain damage, which have been shown to be successful in the visual systems of hamsters and the spinal cords of rats, he is now looking at the olfactory system, one of the most important sensory systems in the brain. He is also interested in psychoanalysis, emotional psychology, theories of mind and quantum physics.
...Architectural Programming of Mega-scale Public Buildings

DENG Ying is performing case studies of the Big Four Projects of Significance in Expo 2010 to be held in Shanghai. As urban sustainability becomes one of the environmental priorities of the 21st century, Expo 2010 is themed Better city, better life accordingly, and features the largest scale urban renewal operation so far in the 156-year history of World Expo. Her research centres on the dualism unique to the Big Four Projects of Significance, with a floor area of 500,000 m² located at the core district of the 5.28 km² Expo site in downtown Shanghai. Unlike most temporary Expo facilities, these four, with a mixed architectural programme of convention, exhibition, trading, culture and recreation, will set the tone for the post-Expo redevelopment which forms an integral part of the city’s waterfront renewal programme.

Left: Master site plan of World Expo 2010 Shanghai China
Right: Rendering of the Big Four Projects of Significance in the Expo Site
Source: Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination

...Wireless Communication

WANG Hong-zheng is conducting research on cooperative communications in wireless networks, which are a strong candidate to significantly improve the performance and throughput of wireless networks, especially for mobile ad hoc networks (MANets). Meanwhile, DAI Xiao-guang is looking at the detection of space-time codes in MIMO (Multiple Input Multiple Output) systems, with the objective of developing fast and efficient detection algorithms for such codes.

...Public Administration

CHAN Kwan-nok is researching the impact of institutional arrangements on agenda-setting in public policymaking. He is tracing the causal processes that link together institutional setting, actor behaviour, and agenda-setting dynamic, and takes part in a number of projects and initiatives that cover civic engagement, civil society management, and governance. GUO Jia’s research concerns environmental protection policy in China, and focuses on the Grain for Green reforestation programme.
Whereas for others, it’s…

...Vocational Education
Understanding the low achievement levels of secondary vocational education (SVE) students in mainland China is the subject of YANG Lan’s research. This quantitative research is designed to identify variables related to the academic achievement of the low-achieving population of Year 1 mainland Chinese secondary vocational students, focusing on the role of students’ personal variables (e.g., academic self-concept, locus of control and approaches to learning) on their academic achievement.

...Cross-cultural Issues
WANG Huang is studying the managerial control of a subsidiary in Guangzhou of a Japanese supermarket called JUSCO. Her main concern is to understand the multifaceted control exercised by the company over both its Japanese and local Guangzhou Chinese staff, and how staff members react to it.

...Water Resources in the Pearl River Basin
The total area of the Pearl River basin is 0.45 million km$^2$, with a registered population in the basin of 150 million. There are four river systems, the East River, North River, West River and Pearl River Delta. The annual run-off generation is 0.74 million m$^3$/km$^2$, about half a percent of the annual precipitation. In the flood season from April to September, the total run-off is about 80% of that of twelve months. Natural disasters related to water resources occur easily. Historically, floods have occurred in all the tributaries of the Pearl River Basin, sometimes spreading to the whole basin. On the other hand, drought is another natural disaster occurring in the Pearl River basin. In 1963, 5% of the total area was subject to drought.
Motivated by evaluating water resources, and mitigating the effects of droughts and floods in the Pearl River basin, NIU Jun’s research work is to detect the relationship between precipitation and streamflow of the basin, and to explore the basic features of the dominant terrestrial hydrological processes in the Pearl River basin.

…A truly diverse and worldly perspective indeed!

William LOASBY, MSc Yr 1
Department of Civil Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Graduate House - Our Home

A clean floor, an orderly bathroom….sunshine comes in the room through bright glass windows – this is Graduate House, our home. Who helps us make it so comfortable? Our industrious attendants! Many thanks should be given to them.

In the hot summer, I saw an attendant wearing a towel around her neck, sometimes taking it off to wipe sweat from her face, then continuing to mop the floor. “You can use the air-conditioner when cleaning my room,” I said to her. “No, no, this is my work, thank you,” she replied to me with a smile.

I use a plastic bag to collect the trash in my room. One day, I found beside my desk a simple carton with a plastic garbage bag on it. It must have been the attendant who did this for my convenience, and every week she would help me to throw out my trash.

In the cold winter, I would sometimes heat up some dishes and cook some noodles and soups in the student lounge. I had no idea how to cook, even though my mother can make lots of delicious dishes. Attendants saw my lack of skill and gave me many suggestions on how long to heat up a dish using the microwave, how much water should be added during the heating, and when to put some vegetables.
in to make my dishes more delicious and nutritious. They taught me this as though they were teaching their own children.

I like to jog. Every night, I go out for a jog after coming back from the office. As many of you know, when going through the front door, we need to press a button to open it. But every time I approach, I hear a sound as the lock is opened by the front desk guard. I just need to push the door and run out. We say hello with a smile to each other, and I really appreciate his behavior, which makes me feel at home.

We share a home with one another in Graduate House, and we live here together through spring, summer, autumn and winter. A greeting at the lobby, in the hallways, in the lift, and smiles on every corner: all these things make us feel this is our sunny home every day.

In our precious student life, lots of things happen here, and there will be many memorable pictures. Saying hi to Helen, joking with Ken, talking with our kind attendants, and meeting friends at P1… I bet most of you have feelings similar to mine at Graduate House. This positive atmosphere in our home does a lot of good in our study and research and will help us achieve more objectives on our road to the future.

NIU Jun, PhD Yr 2
Department of Civil Engineering. Faculty of Engineering

A Day in the Life of a Graduate House Resident

Follow Ken HO and his colour changing t-shirt around Graduate House’s facilities in "A Day in the Life of a Graduate House Resident"

It’s midday and Ken is woken from his sleep by a knock and a shout at the door. It’s cleaning time and cleaning the mess in here will take some time.

Ken learns the hard way that if you sleep under a Doraemon blanket you probably shouldn’t leave your door unlocked!
Whilst brushing his teeth, Ken realises he slept in his last clean t-shirt! There are only two options, wear dirty clothes and hope everyone has a cold... or go to the laundry room.

Ken chooses the latter. First things first, Ken needs laundry tokens. Having a lot of washing to do, Ken tries haggling for ten tokens.

Beaten down to six, Ken heads off to the eleventh floor.

Ken’s luck is in, there’s a free washing machine!

Holding his breath, Ken fills the machine, then thinks of what to do for an hour.
An hour-long Alpine jog on the running machine seemed the best option.

Two minutes into the run, Ken’s body tells him it wasn’t such a good idea.

Instead, Ken hangs out in the common room with friends (who’d rather be left alone to read).

The washing should be done by now. Ken dashes up to the laundry room in the hope that he gets there before his washing is dumped in the dirtiest corner of the room by the next user.

Happy his clothes are not on the floor, Ken turns to the dryers. They’re broken. Wearing clean clothes is a distant dream.

Enraged, Ken says to himself, “at least I have my colour changing t-shirt to wear. I’ll take my anger out on the tennis court”.

After numerous victories at Flora Ho tennis courts, Ken returns back to Graduate House.

Waving to the watchman, Ken’s stomach starts to rumble. Time to get some food.

Ken heads off back down the hill to Wellcome for some shopping. Some meat, vegetables and rice later, Ken has all the ingredients for a delicious dinner.

The chef works on his masterpiece. Slaving over a hot hotplate, Ken cooks up a feast.

After dinner, Ken realises he hasn’t done any work today and heads down to use the computers.
Ken heads down to the common room to surf the net. There’s only one thing missing… where’s Bong?

Full of distractions, Ken decides he can get more work done in his room.

The sight of more work makes Ken tired. Time for twelve hours sleep before another day in Graduate House.

By Nicholas HAK, MA (Transport Policy and Planning) Yr 1, Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Sciences

Graduate House: A Place to Make Friends

Imagine your first day at HKU. Did you know anybody here? Did you feel lonely? What was one of the first things you did? Chances are that you made some new friends at Graduate House.

Graduate House is truly a wonderful place to meet friends, and it’s so easy to do so. Every time we take or wait for the lift, do our laundry, cook in the pantry, watch TV in the lounge, we have the opportunity to meet someone we’ve never met before. It all starts with a simple “Hello,” can continue with “My name is ___. What’s your
name?", and can proceed to anything from, “Where are you from?” to “What are you studying at HKU?”

I’m very pleased to see groups of friends gathering in the lounges to eat hotpot, watch movies, play cards, or gather to play sports at the university sports centres. I’m also glad to see people meet new friends at social gatherings such as the annual Welcome Party and regular Movie Nights. I have fond memories of watching some 2006 FIFA World Cup matches with dozens of cheering fellow residents, and look forward to cheering on both Team Canada and Team China with my fellow Graduate House residents during the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.

Making friends at Graduate House is about having company, learning and experiencing new things, and enriching ourselves. It’s wonderful to have people with whom to pass time, share our thoughts and feelings, play sports, eat meals, etc. Friends introduce us to new hobbies, new ideas, and even new friends. For some of us, especially those of us from out of town, it is especially important to make friends at Graduate House. Those of us who didn’t know anyone in Hong Kong before coming here may otherwise feel lonely and isolated. The luckiest of us all have met (or will meet) our spouses (or future spouses) during our time at Graduate House.

Graduate House is a place where we can find people who are similar to and different from us. Sometimes, we may want to be with people like us, such as people from the same country or hometown, or classmates from within the same faculty. Other times, we may wish to meet someone from another part of the world, with whom we can share and exchange our cultural differences. We may also wish to meet people of other academic disciplines or career orientations – at Graduate House, medical students, lawyers, journalists, and scholars alike can mix and mingle. These people not only provide companionship during our time at HKU, but may be important clients, colleagues, or collaborators in the future.

I feel fortunate to have met as many friends as I have at Graduate House. Some of the friendships I’ve forged here will be lifelong relationships with people who have become as close and dear to me as friends I’ve met anywhere else. A select few have become soul mates with whom I share a spiritual connection, and who will always occupy a special place in my heart. I certainly hope that all of my fellow residents have made friends here just as I have.

Ken HO, PhD Yr 3
Centre of Asian Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences
Lasting Friendships

It’s easy to think that the relatively short term of residency and the diverse origins of residents at Graduate House would make enduring friendship difficult to maintain. Happily, I know for a fact that these difficulties can be overcome – in fact, maybe it’s that very combination of circumstances that gives Graduate House advantages to forming long lasting friendships.

Most of us were newly arrived in Hong Kong and quite uncertain about our futures, beyond our commitments to study and complete our respective programmes. As postgraduate students, we thought of ourselves as self-sufficient to a large degree and so the willingness to engage in ‘community-building’ events or activities may have been difficult for many of us to find (stories and impressions of the rituals of social integration at undergraduate residence halls probably didn’t help matters).

One of the first events I remember taking part in while at Graduate House was the PGSA Lantern Festival Hike up the Peak. Many residents from Graduate House took part and while I didn’t know too many of them at the time, I recognised quite a few familiar faces and took a step toward understanding the diversity of residents. However, even from the first few days in residence, I had become familiar with my floor mates. Thanks to the inter-floor pantries and shared bathrooms at Graduate House, a common sense of interdependence upon facilities and cooperative neighbours was quick to develop. Two such neighbours were at the far end of the eleventh floor corridor - Stan and Greg – and they remain friends to this day. I was further up the hall but when I learned that Stan was in my department, and Greg hailed from my home city, it seemed that the building had conspired to build friendships again.

Other friends came into our lives through these first contacts or through other means, but these initial connections – made possible by the very design of our residence building, and our common sense of cautious interdependence – have a strength all their own. Many lasting friendships have begun at Graduate House – and perhaps even because of Graduate House. I believe its next 10 years will prove no less significant in the lives of new postgraduate students arriving at HKU.

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Acknowledgements

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