

The decision to spend a year on exchange at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) was one of the best decisions I ever made. Not only do you swap views of Heslington East for views of Victoria harbour, but I draw on skills and knowledge that I developed whilst on exchange almost every day. That may sound like something of an exaggeration, but it actually isn't as a year on exchange:

- develops resilience and practical problem-solving skills due to the fact that you will be in a new and potentially unfamiliar environment relatively often;
- requires you to recognise opportunities when they arise and develop your planning skills so that you can take advantage of said opportunities; and
- allows you to live, work and travel with people from across the world and better understand how to work effectively with people from across the world in order to achieve shared goals.

I currently work as a final-seat trainee solicitor at the international law firm DLA Piper and throughout my almost two years here, I have found that all of the above are directly and indirectly applicable to working in an international law firm where you will regularly be called upon to work with colleagues and clients in various parts of the world who may have different ways of working as well as different interpretations of and approaches to issues whilst you will need to continually solve issues as and when they arise, often thinking pre-emptively and acting independently. Indeed, there is a reason why most firms offer secondments to trainees and associates – because they are a fantastic way to gain a lot of experience and awareness in a relatively short period of time.

... and that is before even thinking about the other benefits of exchanging at HKU.

Living and studying in Hong Kong gives you a huge range of opportunities that are simply not available in other cities due to how compact it is. Highlights for me are:

- **the food** - see [here](#) or [here](#);
- **the travel** - HK is the perfect base from which to travel across Asia – whilst there I managed to travel to Japan, mainland China, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia;
- **the contrast** – HK spans some of the most densely populated, neon-lit places on earth to uninhabited islands, remote beaches, craggy mountains and wetlands and (surprisingly) some of the best [hiking](#) in the world;
- **the sheer amount of things to do** – the HK Sevens tournament, Wednesday night horseracing at the Happy Valley racecourse, night markets, dai pai dongs, night markets;
- **the people** - you'll make lifelong friends with HK residents and other exchange students from across the world – I will be going to my HK flatmate's wedding later this year and will be visiting a friend from exchange in California in the summer; and
- **the opportunities** – which seemed to just appear. For example, I took part in the Harvard World MUN conference in Seoul, joined the Hong Kong University Student Consulting Group and gained work experience with a barrister all of which were fantastic experiences and were very helpful in demonstrating the all important commercial awareness that firms look for.

Nick Larvin, YLS Graduate (2012-2016)