

STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2028



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OVERVIEW

Established in 1991, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology is now a globally respected university and contributes both locally and internationally to talent development, new knowledge and societal interests. Being international is an intrinsic element of the HKUST spirit. The University was founded on the principle that education, original scholarship, and the development of society are integrally linked and best pursued together. We believe that humanity's advancement is generated through the fostering of an international community and the nurturing of individuals through holistic education, original research, and knowledge transfer into the wider society.

Continuing Commitments: We are in a time of great challenges, in Hong Kong as well as around the globe. A campus supporting openness, diversity and mutual respect is our highest priority. We must join hands in upholding our core principles and values, by exercising individual and institutional integrity, promoting our international standard, and improving our gender distributions as well as enhancing cultural diversity. Facing all these issues and needs, there is an additional demand on resources, both human and financial. Given the current and future challenges, some members have been encountering elevated financial and mental stresses. The University will continue to place a high priority to provide financial relief for those in need as well as to support mental-wellness via peer sharing and professional counseling. We will also continue the substantial partnership established with our external supporters in these areas.

Embracing New Era: Impacted by the pandemic, we have adapted and sought to optimize teaching arrangements, based on the valuable input from our faculty, students and staff

through technological backing and multiple innovative arrangements. Such efforts will continue as we not only are under unprecedented challenges in teaching and learning but also should continue to innovate and improve with the hard-learned lessons in recent past. On the research front, in addition to substantial government support, we now see that a growing number of private enterprises are seeking close collaboration with HKUST in different areas, motivated by mutual interest in advancing frontiers of science and technology. Such partnership will help propel Hong Kong and the region to innovate and to transform its societal and economic landscape.

Signature Themes of the Future: Sustainable conduct, both locally and globally, is a paramount topic of forever impact. At HKUST, in addition to commitments of cutting down energy, water and waste, there is a self-expectation that we should make strong contributions to address the issues based on science and technology, as well as policy, human behavior and psychology. The Sustainable Smart Campus “as a Living Lab” initiative^①, with substantial commitments of the University's resources has been gaining momentum, and will be encouraged to further scale up for comprehensive experimentation. Members of HKUST have created impressive marks in **intelligent industrialization** including robotics, big data, renewable energy and new materials. There are highly recognized enterprises related to personal drones, autonomous water vehicles and cars, FinTech, electronics and biomedical technologies which were founded by our alumni and faculty. Riding on these achievements, we will also develop energetic frameworks to support these endeavors with a goal of advancing and supporting **human capital** from birth to the end. Under these three themes, our Strategic Plan is aimed at addressing **the future of living, the future of work, and the future of people.**

^① <https://ssc.hkust.edu.hk/>

Resetting Our Academic Framework: HKUST is well-positioned and will continue to enthusiastically support members to pursue curiosity-driven investigations in any disciplines within our established academic scope. Such activities may be fundamental with no immediate prospect for practical adoption. In parallel, the University is motivated to facilitate mission-encouraged research and learning in response to numerous challenges and opportunities of great societal implications. We recognize that the success of such pursuits requires expertise across disciplines along with necessary institution-wide structures and resources. It is impressive that with the COVID-19 pandemic sweeping across the world, members of HKUST have stepped up and made numerous highly recognized contributions to help address the needs. Such societal missions can provide long lasting satisfaction and substantial encouragement to our research and teaching scope. A primary focus of this Strategic Plan is the conceptualization and implementation of the dual support of both curiosity-driven and mission-encouraged pursuits, in systematic manners, through reimagined academic programs and structures. Clearly, increased resources and new physical infrastructure are necessary to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration and to promote world leading ambition to our entire HKUST community. A system-wide framework is needed to address new frontiers and world-wide challenges beyond merely adjusting the existing framework.

Unified HKUST - Complementary Campuses: The establishment of HKUST(Guangzhou)^② creates an exceptional opportunity for new resources, organizational structure and physical settings needed for the systematic development of cross-disciplinary programs in concert with the disciplinary-oriented efforts on our Clear Water Bay campus.

We envision a unified university system that capitalizes on the aforementioned duality while promoting two complementary campuses without duplicating academic programs, which are of separate legal entities of independent finances with no cross-subsidization.

Under the Unified HKUST-Complementary Campuses umbrella, academic structures and degree programs are differentiated, the overall infrastructures substantially enlarged and updated, and courses and central research facilities open to students and researchers both ways. Even though the two campuses are of separate legal entities and financial frameworks, faculty are encouraged and supported to collaborate and co-supervise students, and students will have opportunities to pursue degrees offered by both campuses. This way, members of both campuses will freely choose their research topics and related studies with University's overall enlarged scope, with more flexibility and better support. Accordingly, HKUST will continue to advance its role as a globally leading institution, and our faculty and students will find an encouraging atmosphere for their passions and interests to better develop their potential.

Upholding Core Principles: Ever since our founding days, HKUST's position in teaching, learning, research and academic pursuits has remained the same. These fundamentals are repeatedly validated by our regular conduct as well as through internationally-benchmarked objective measures. We remain steadfast in our support for academic freedom^③, and scholarly endeavors.

We are determined to contribute our utmost efforts to the future of Hong Kong and beyond.

^② <https://hkust-gz.edu.cn>

^③ <https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/about/faq/what-is-academic-freedom>
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/academic-freedom>
<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2010/12/21/defining-academic-freedom>

Strategic Objectives: With the above reasoning, the University deems it critical to reflect, assess and reinvent our approaches in achieving our objectives while responding to the new circumstances. As such, HKUST will move forward as and by:

- A University of **talents**
- An international **leader** in education and research
- Incorporating **innovation and entrepreneurship** in our spirit
- An exemplar of **best-in-class** standards, practices, and operations
- A champion of **diversity**

In the new University Strategic Plan, our underlying aspirations not only set out to sustain and advance HKUST as a trendsetter in both education and research landscapes for the long term, but also address the evolving needs and challenges facing society.



A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Assessing Where We Are

Established in 1991, HKUST is an internationally-minded research University founded on the principle that education, original scholarship, and societal development are intimately linked and best pursued together. Fundamental to this principle is our global and humanity-oriented approach: advancement of humanity through the development of an international community and the nurturing of individuals alongside original research and knowledge transfer. These ideals support each other and are reflected in all endeavors of the University: advances in the arts and sciences, engineering, and business are strongly connected to societal issues such as sustainability and climate change; wealth disparity; social justice; geopolitical conflicts; and notably the pandemic that has transformed our world over in the past few months.

As a prominent international University, HKUST has a profound commitment to furthering the mission of the academy: providing an open, inclusive, and free campus to support education and research of the highest quality. As an important Hong Kong institution, HKUST has a deep obligation to help address the social, political, and economic challenges that our city faces.

HKUST supports in-depth studies in selected disciplines, structured under four Schools: Science; Engineering; Business and Management; and Humanities and Social Science. Each School offers degree programs, recruits faculty, admits and educates students, and engages staff based on its scope and ambition. Our faculty independently choose and pursue their research activities, while Departments and Divisions within Schools offer home bases under an umbrella that ensures

disciplines as a whole flourish. In addition to Schools, the Interdisciplinary Programs Office (IPO) encourages, facilitates, and promotes academic endeavors that do not fit neatly within a single School's intellectual scope.

This unrestricted blue-sky framework, designed to stimulate creativity and enable discovery, is a trademark of a modern university. An important feature of HKUST's integrated approach is the support provided for the further development of the ideas and inventions generated by our University community. Going beyond initial inspiration and invention, the University assists and encourages the application of basic research through practical usage and entrepreneurship, along with other societal contributions. These knowledge transfer activities are a core component of our approach to fulfilling our primary objectives.

Overcoming Existing Boundaries

The breadth of contemporary scholarship and the ever more complex problems facing society are challenging our traditional academic division into Schools and Disciplines. As new research directions take shape and as new expertise among faculty and students develops, the traditional disciplinary boundaries can seem restrictive. For example, the newly emerging area of Data Science requires core competencies and encompasses research directions that do not fit within any existing academic department. Similarly, the pandemic has shown the urgent need for a University structure that joins together the wide expertise (including biology, medicine, public health, advanced materials, autonomous systems and sensor technologies, integrated data analytics, economics, public policy, and ethics) required to provide mission-encouraged, system-wide solutions.

Our Schools and IPO structures have served the University well, and we expect them to continue to do so for many years to come. Yet in order to effectively realize our broader goals, we must identify ways to not only be more hospitable to endeavors that cross disciplinary boundaries, but also to encourage systematic efforts unbounded by disciplinary definitions. While such interdisciplinary efforts are reflected and supported in HKUST's current activities, a system-wide framework, fundamentally outside our current discipline-focused structures, is needed in order to encourage and develop new and emerging frontiers. A fundamental change of this sort is not possible by merely overlaying or adjusting the existing disciplinary format. It must be done without compromising our support for established disciplinary pursuits whose intrinsic merits remain undiminished.

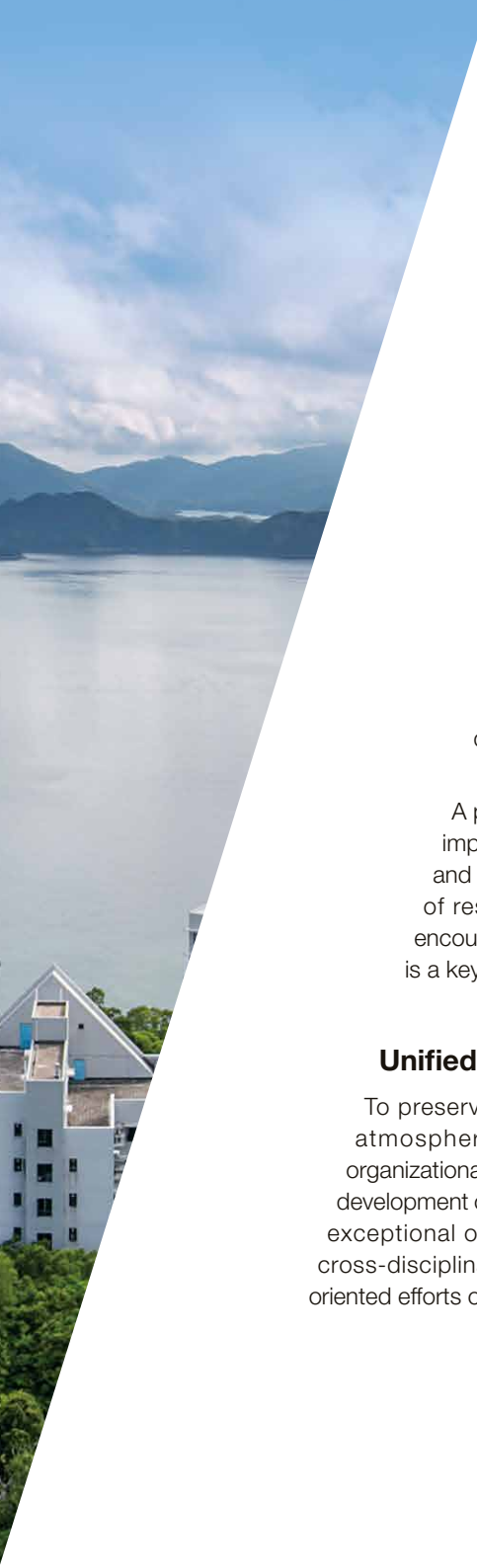
Resetting Our Academic Framework

Leading universities promote cross-disciplinary research directions in part because of their implications on addressing major societal challenges with possible implications on humanity. As both scope and integration of our research and educational endeavors evolve, we naturally expect a broadened range of activities that include not only the blue sky, curiosity-driven efforts that have formed the core of our program, but also more mission-encouraged research spurred by the grand challenges facing humanity.

HKUST is well-positioned to fulfill our institutional ambition by leading efforts to both: (1) pursue curiosity-driven investigations on topics in any discipline, whose ultimate impact may not be initially apparent (e.g., discovery of black holes, the double helix, fractals and strange attractors, the invention of the transistor), as well as (2) mount mission-encouraged, multi-faceted responses in systematic ways







to identified challenges of great magnitude (e.g., space exploration, human/machine coexistence, pandemic and public health, inequality and inequity, and global sustainability), whose success requires expertise from various disciplines.

To cover the entire spectrum spanning pure scholarship, implementable solutions, practical adoption, and entrepreneurship and transfer of knowledge beyond the University, both disciplinary and cross-disciplinary activities are needed. Nurturing both curiosity-driven and mission-encouraged endeavors is critical for the future of the University and the development of academia as a whole. However, these two distinct approaches lead naturally to different degree programs and underlying academic structures.

A primary focus of our Strategic Plan is the conceptualization and implementation of this dual support through enlarged resources and new physical infrastructures. The development and addition of resources and infrastructure that are supportive of both, encouraging cooperation without creating unhealthy competition, is a key component.

Unified HKUST

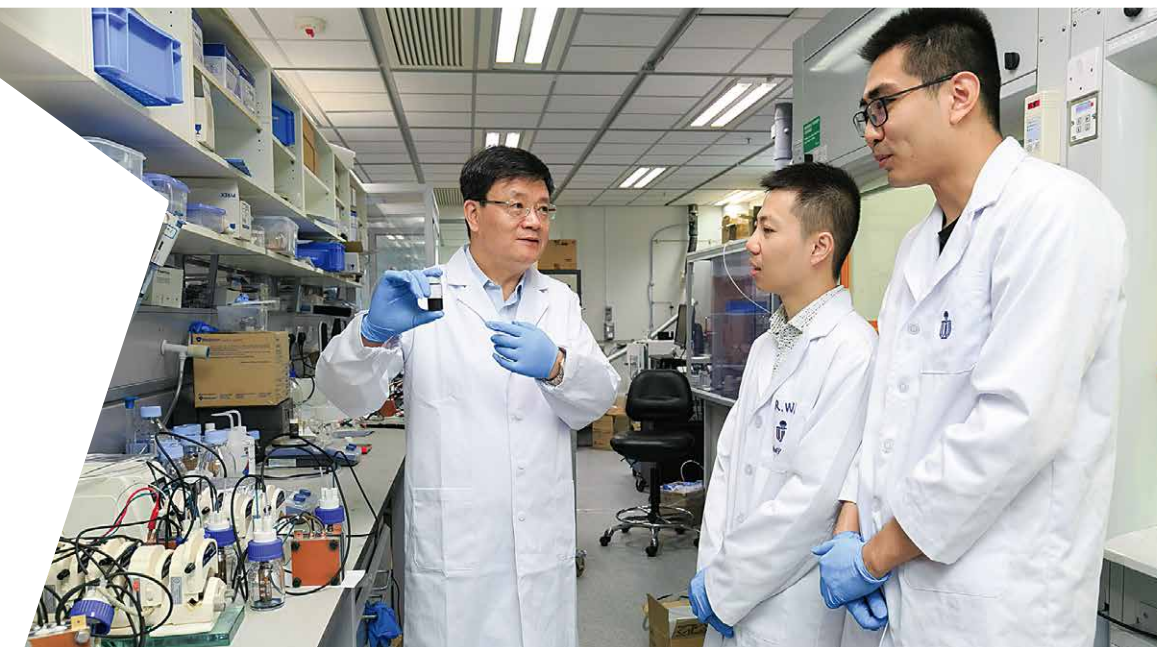
To preserve and further develop a diverse and encouraging atmosphere to meet the above goals, new resources, organizational structures, and physical settings are required. The development of our new campus HKUST (Guangzhou) creates an exceptional opportunity for the systematic development of cross-disciplinary programs in concert with the disciplinary-oriented efforts on our Clear Water Bay campus.

Under the Unified HKUST-Complementary Campuses umbrella, the current Strategic Plan strengthens our vision and strategic priorities, with an emphasis on our expansion both physically and conceptually. We envision a Unified System that capitalizes on the duality outlined above, promoting complementary University campuses while avoiding duplicating programs. The complementary academic structure allows establishment of new intellectual domains to fit the University's diverse goals, and promotes collaboration and integration between campuses, including facilities and services, policies and mechanisms, and professional standards.

The scope and complexity of the problems we face call for new approaches with large-scale change and significant experimentation. Complementary academic structures and non-overlapping degree programs will offer and promote a healthy mix of curiosity-driven and mission-encouraged academic and related activities. Under this framework, members of the HKUST system can observe, learn from, and collaborate with each other. Such opportunities will integrate and enhance activities on both campuses, providing a bridge between disciplinary and cross-disciplinary endeavors. Most importantly, the unique individual campuses will enable faculty and students to find the best atmosphere in which to follow their passions and fully develop their interests.

FIVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES





We have sharpened and updated our strategic directions in substantial ways. The refreshed strategic objectives represent the desired emphasis for our next phase of development. Our underlying aspirations not only set out to sustain and advance HKUST as a trendsetter in both education and research landscapes for the long term, but also address the evolving needs and challenges facing society.

A University of **TALENTS**

Under the Unified HKUST-Complementary Campuses umbrella, we are prepared to extend our global reservoir of minds and abilities by looking beyond conventional academic disciplines and being open to the recruitment and nurturing of more diverse areas of strength among students, faculty and staff.

An International **LEADER** in Education and Research

By balancing disciplinary and cross-disciplinary activities, and on-going development of our educational thinking, our two complementary campuses will serve as dual knowledge hubs, creating a distinct synergy and model for the future.

Incorporating **INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP** in Our Spirit

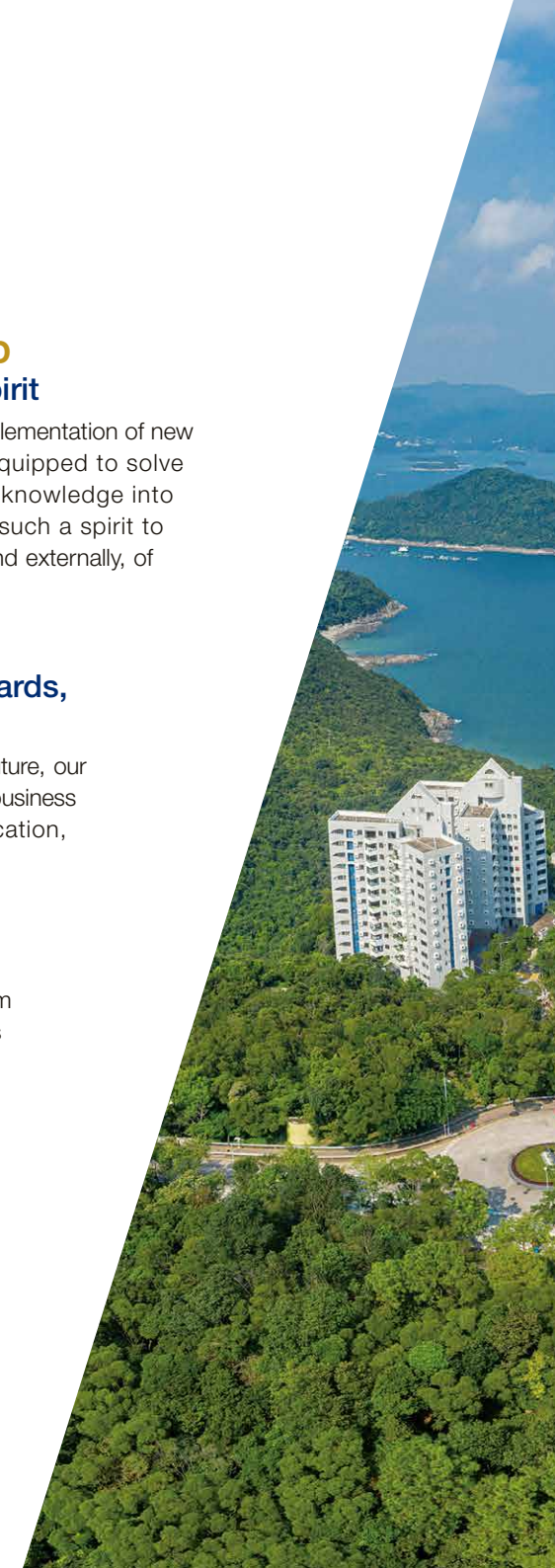
Our fast-changing world requires ever-faster implementation of new concepts and technologies, and a mindset equipped to solve real-world challenges through the transfer of knowledge into positive, sustainable change. We will strive for such a spirit to become a recognized core component, internally and externally, of our knowledge transfer endeavors and social impact.

An Exemplar of **BEST-IN-CLASS** Standards, Practices, and Operations

With sustainable development as the key to present and future, our goal is to deliver the best possible campus environment, and business processes and systems to support our world-class education, research, and diverse University community for the long term.

A Champion of **DIVERSITY**

Our goal is to embrace and value differences, to learn to learn from each other, and to foster a mindset of diversity that promotes inclusiveness, collegiality, and respect.





Five Strategic Objectives

A University of Talents

HKUST has been successful in drawing top minds from around the world. Our new Guangzhou campus, i.e. HKUST (Guangzhou), sets to provide exciting new reach and opportunities for education, research, and knowledge transfer. We are prepared to extend our global reservoir of minds and abilities by looking beyond conventional academic disciplines and being open to the recruitment and nurturing of more diverse areas of strength among students, faculty and staff.

Recruiting the best talents effectively and competitively

We are looking for and developing students for pure academic and broad-based talents. This will be achieved by flexible/targeted admissions, scholarship schemes, and incentives that can attract quality **students** with diverse talents and backgrounds. We aim at rolling out a comprehensive outreach campaign, emphasizing the HKUST experience and using a mix of engagement means applicable to suit the constantly changing environment or the “new normal”. Such engagement will involve connecting with prospective students, parents, teachers and schools by combining physical channels with technologies and online communication platforms.

Given the key role our **faculty** members play in both our education and research endeavors, we will be proactive and open in identifying and reaching out to leading and promising candidates from around the world, targeting to attract scholars in fields within and beyond HKUST’s traditional areas of strength or disciplinary areas to drive forward evolving opportunities at both our Clear Water Bay and Guangzhou campuses and our cross-disciplinary activities.

We also fully recognize the essential role of our **staff** in the efficient and effective day-to-day administration, operations, including health and safety, and campus management, and the need to recruit and retain top staff for the myriad posts this encompasses. HKUST will position itself as the “employer of choice”, ensuring an all-around supportive and high performance culture with corresponding reward and recognition.

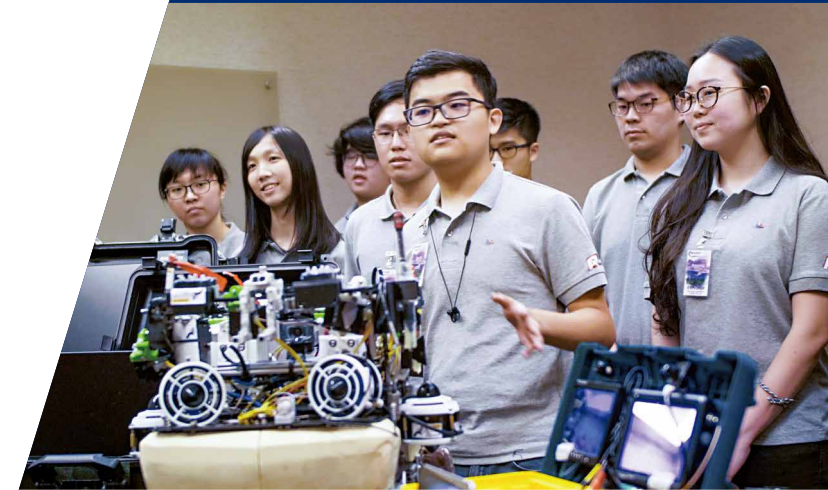
Nurturing talents to achieve full potential

Recruitment is only the start of a life-changing journey. For **students** to fully benefit from their HKUST experience, we will foster and develop academic capacity, social skills, entrepreneurial spirit, community service, and personal development opportunities so that each can find their own space, unlock their own interests and potential, and make their relationship with the University truly transformational and lifelong.

We will regularly assess and enhance our students' breadth of intellectual development so as to build understanding of different fields and perspectives alongside their major program, and widen their interests. Beyond the curriculum, strengthening and expansion of all-round student support, including mental health and overall well-being, competency-based learning, and stronger connections with alumni will build up capacity, confidence, and networks. The HKUST experience for students and the University community as a whole will be further enriched by new provision of more on-campus housing, including for all first-year undergraduates, deepening peer friendships and multicultural integration.

As the development of HKUST (Guangzhou) progresses, **faculty** will benefit from the expanded research scope that this will bring, offering more diversity, interdisciplinary possibilities and knowledge transfer openings, and enabling our academics to follow their passions and develop their interests. Joint proposals, joint grant applications, and large-scale research group projects between faculty from both campuses will be encouraged and facilitated. In addition to such research career development opportunities, faculty leadership capabilities will be enhanced through management development programs, and a systematic junior faculty mentoring mechanism.

For **staff**, a performance culture will be cultivated. Succession planning, opportunities for job rotations, leadership and management training for middle and senior management will be among the areas we actively explore.



2

An International **LEADER** in Education and Research

HKUST's new Guangzhou campus provides an unparalleled opportunity for us to elevate our position as a trendsetter in frontier knowledge and breakthrough research, while contributing to solving the complex challenges facing the world. By balancing disciplinary and cross-disciplinary activities, and on-going development of our educational thinking, our two complementary campuses will serve as dual knowledge hubs, creating a distinct synergy and model for the future.

Delivering an education to enable original scholarship and endeavors

A founding principle of HKUST is that education, original research, and the development of society are integrally linked and best pursued together. In developing this “three-pronged” approach to meet the needs of our changing world, the degree programs we offer and the way we deliver our education must be able to flexibly respond to emerging trends resulting from social changes, including the COVID-19 global pandemic.

To spark and develop the creative thinking and endeavors that will mobilize the full capabilities of our students and on graduation enable them to serve the global community, we will focus on two complementary strategies. We will continue to advance the disciplinary activities of our Schools' traditional core areas of science, engineering, business and management, and humanities and social science, and those intellectual endeavors that do not neatly fit within a single School's scope through our Interdisciplinary Programs Office. However, we will also go beyond the University's existing horizons and conventional academic disciplines to embrace the potential of cross-disciplinary pursuits to generate new vision and human resources that can, among others, contribute to solutions to pressing and complex global challenges impacting the future of our living, work and people.

At the Clear Water Bay campus, we are constantly upgrading our undergraduate curriculum. Cross-disciplinary elements in the form of Extended Majors (Major + X) will be introduced to broaden undergraduates' perspectives from other disciplines. In addition, we will build on our signature “Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program” (UROP), which offers early hands-on research opportunities on faculty projects, by introducing two more programs, namely an “Undergraduate Teaching Opportunities Program” (UTOP) and “Undergraduate Practice Opportunities Program” (UPOP) for workplace immersion and to boost specific career development in students' areas of interest.





Additional scope and flexibility will be provided by the different degree programs offered at HKUST (Guangzhou), where the setting-up of the new campus creates an exceptional opportunity for the systematic development of cross-disciplinary programs in a complementary way to the disciplinary-oriented efforts on our Clear Water Bay campus, with no duplication of existing programs and academic structures.

On-going improvement of the way we deliver our education is a further priority. This will involve the provision of a stimulating, participatory learning experience, enabled by technology in order to cater to the learning needs of students anywhere. Through a more student-centric pedagogy, interactive exchanges, discussions, and project-based learning, students will learn to think creatively, integrate ideas boldly, solve problems innovatively, and work collaboratively.

Spearheading a dual approach to research excellence

This dual approach will be further reflected in our approach to research excellence. In an era when technology combined with human passion, intelligence, and ingenuity promise to unlock unprecedented understanding of ourselves and the world, HKUST's new model will contribute to the development of academia as well as address major societal challenges and their implications for humanity, both critical contributions for a global university of the future.

We will promote and support curiosity-driven and open/blue sky pursuits in which the impact may not be initially apparent (for example, discovery of black holes, the double helix) in any discipline, including emerging fields and new areas of expertise. We will also encourage mission-driven, multifaceted efforts that look beyond existing academic

boundaries to explore and develop novel cross-disciplinary solutions to practically impact the major challenges facing the world, such as global sustainability, public health, and inequality, as well as contribute to developments of great magnitude, for example, space exploration and human/machine coexistence.

Our dual endeavor will be carried out through increased resources, new physical infrastructure, and the exceptional opportunity offered by the development of HKUST (Guangzhou) to enable the systematic development of cross-disciplinary programs in concert with the disciplinary-oriented efforts at our Clear Water Bay campus.

To assist such activities, the University will strengthen the leadership role of our current cross-disciplinary research institutes to serve as a conduit for engaging faculty and connecting academic units across our two campuses. We will also plan the renewal of our research facilities and devise new policies to achieve self-sustainability of our Central Research Facilities, to ensure that our research environment continues to be attractive to new and existing faculty, to emphasize differentiation and minimize duplication between our two campuses, and to effectively support world-class research.

3

Incorporating **INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP** in Our Spirit

Our fast-changing world requires ever-faster implementation of new concepts and technologies, and a mindset equipped to solve real-world challenges through the transfer of knowledge into positive, sustainable change. We will strive for such a spirit to become a recognized core component, internally and externally, of our knowledge transfer endeavors and social impact.

From ideas to actions

Members of HKUST will be given an environment to embrace the boldness to think beyond traditional perspectives, and the willingness to implement novel ideas, considered in concert with people's needs and sustainability locally, regionally, and globally.

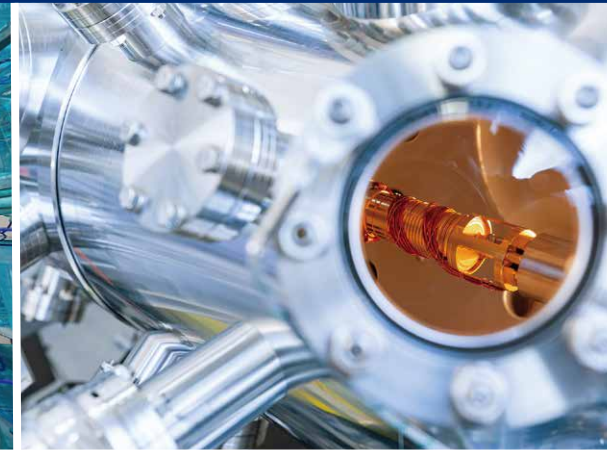
Our campuses will continue to serve as “living labs” for our members to experiment by putting their ideas into actions, and to meaningfully learn and grow from these experiences. We will extend our signature “Sustainable Smart Campus as a Living Lab”^④ initiative and collaboration on both campuses. The scheme, an innovation in itself, creates the opportunity for HKUST students, faculty, and staff to tackle real-life problems, large and smaller in scope, through trying out their smart and sustainable ideas on our campus. For example, a smart mini-grid showcasing 100% renewable energy, and a resource-efficient aquaponics farm that serves as a student and faculty lab and green business platform, among many other projects already underway.



^④ <https://ssc.hkust.edu.hk/>

Connecting with industry and society

At the same time, we will foster our engagement and collaboration with government, industry and other areas of society to enhance the relevance of our research endeavors overall, and maximize resources and knowledge transfer opportunities regionally and internationally. To optimize such openings, the University will better coordinate internal support systems on both campuses for entrepreneurial pursuits.



4

An Exemplar of **BEST-IN-CLASS** Standards, Practices, and Operations

With sustainable development as the key to present and future, our goal is to deliver the best possible campus environment, and business processes and systems to support our world-class education, research, and diverse University community for the long term.

Over the previous Strategic Plan[®], we made good progress in expanding our Clear Water Bay facilities through major capital projects such as on-campus residences that can enhance student life, and upgrades to our research and innovation activities. Our intention now is to steer HKUST to the next level as a holistic sustainability leader.

Sustainability in action

Building on the goal to move the University toward zero-carbon, zero-waste, and net-positive environmental campus operations, we are refreshing the HKUST Sustainability Challenge[®] with new targets in areas such as energy and greenhouse gases, waste-to-landfill management, landscape and biodiversity, and community well-being. We will also develop our management structures and provide more on-campus opportunities for student initiatives and research projects accordingly.

Financially, the University will seek to maintain a sound position to sustain existing operations and support new areas, in view of the uncertain macro environment, including the pandemic and its aftermath. In exercising prudence and looking to diversify our revenue streams, the University will continue to advance and extend our academic strengths and excellence.



[®] https://strategicplan.hkust.edu.hk/hkust_strategic_plan_2016-2020

[®] <https://green.hkust.edu.hk/about/2028challenge>

Digital-empowered work culture

A key element in achieving such goals will be our implementation of next-generation business processes, information technologies, and systems. This will improve the effectiveness of our administrative framework as a whole and make it more empowering, efficient, and productive.

Initiatives will include digital transformation, streamlined management, and a user-centric focus. A more user-friendly resource platform will also be set up for easier visibility and accessibility to organizational processes, structures, and key personnel. An IT-enabled and supervisor-driven safety management system will add to efficiency related to health and safety through upgrading or establishing relevant databases, along with more effective safety performance monitoring.



5 A Champion of **DIVERSITY**

As both an international university and Hong Kong institution, HKUST seeks to advance knowledge, understanding and awareness of self and others through the development of an international community and nurturing of individuals.

HKUST is proud to be the home of talents from many different cultural and educational backgrounds, forming a solid foundation to work together as an integrated team not only to learn, explore, and understand the world better but ourselves and others. Our goal is to embrace and value differences, to learn to learn from each other, and to foster a mindset of diversity that promotes inclusiveness, collegiality, and respect.

Open minds

In advancing an open, cohesive, and collaborative environment across all levels, we will foster appreciation of diversity to bring the HKUST community together. This will be assisted by enhanced communication and promotion of inclusiveness.

We will bring down prejudices and biases, and ensure a level playing field, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, socio-economic background, etc. For it is such openness and diversity that spur the inspiration and creativity to see from different angles, bringing an opportunity to spark fresh ideas and synthesize new ways of teaching, learning, researching, and transferring our original ideas into technologies and approaches with practical application. This includes genuine academic diversity unlimited by traditional boundaries and welcoming of outliers.







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