

# Can liberal arts thrive in China? One college suggests they can

Despite holding its own at Peking University, Yuanpei College still encounters resistance to its approach, professor says

July 21, 2022

[Pola Lem](#)

Twitter: [@PolaLem](#)

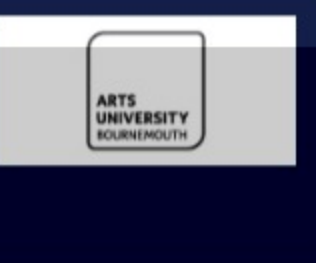
As a new president takes the helm at Peking University (PKU), its liberal arts college is arguably on the firmest footing since its establishment.

From its humble beginnings in 2001 as a small experimental programme within



## FEATURED JOBS

Lecturer BA (Hons) Illustration  
ARTS UNIVERSITY  
BOURNEMOUTH



Research Fellow / Engineer (Membrane / Wastewater)  
SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (SIT)



Research Engineer / Fellow (Chilled Water Systems)  
SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (SIT)



Professional Officer

[See all jobs](#)

...in the market, which is in competition among Chinese graduates higher than ever before.

...in the administration. Some professors do understand that Yuanpei is not a short-term experiment, even after 20 years," said Professor Sun.

...where parents spend many years of preparation in order to place them in top universities to study narrowly defined professional fields, Yuanpei's approach still seems radical.

Using W...  
'Aftart' enviro...

Griff...

Prom...

ADVERTISEMENT

Go deeper into all your data

XPS 13

[Learn More](#)

Students there have the freedom to choose their classes - with no core requirements - and can graduate in between three and six years instead of the standard four. They don't even need to declare a major by their second year.

By design, the college doesn't have its own professors, a decision that still sometimes puts it in tension with the broader faculty at PKU, some of whom see Yuanpei students as lacking in commitment to a discipline and competing for limited resources with the students inside their own departments.

"This gave us a lot of challenges in the beginning because students and professors from other departments didn't want students from Yuanpei," Professor Sun said.

Since then, the students' performance in their classes has helped shift the dial, convincing reluctant professors "that a student not picking any major in beginning and who could change major would perform better than those students who study professional knowledge from the beginning," said Professor Sun.

...for business because it was their parents' decision. Students expect to study what they want to study.

...like most university students, who pick a department and simply follow the curriculum.

We're recruiting in airports

With unique benefits such as travel discount, Hertz, free parking and enhanced pay...

[Apply now](#)

...China's infrastructure, despite the fact that...