Toolkit for Non-local Students
- Working in Hong Kong

Career Planning and Development Centre
Office of Student Affairs
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

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This toolkit is designed to serve as a general reference addressing the key areas that non-local students should pay attention to, prepare for and comply with when they seek job opportunities in Hong Kong. Information in this toolkit is drawn from various sources and relevant websites. As information may change from time to time, you are advised to refer to relevant official sources and websites regularly for updates.

We wish you every success in job hunting, rewarding work experience and a fulfilling life in Hong Kong.

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References
A. **Conditions of Stay**

All non-local students should abide by the laws of Hong Kong and comply with the “Conditions of stay” as prescribed in Chapter 115A Regulation 2 ([http://www.legislation.gov.hk/chi/home.htm](http://www.legislation.gov.hk/chi/home.htm)) (quoted below).

Chapter 115A IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS
Regulation: 2 Conditions of stay

(3) Permission given to a person to land in Hong Kong as a student shall be subject to the following conditions of stay-

(a) that he shall become a student only at a specified school, university or other educational institution and undertake such course of study as may be approved by the Director; and

(b) that he shall not-

(i) take any employment, whether paid or unpaid; or

(ii) establish or join in any business.

B. **Employment Policy for Non-local Students in Hong Kong**

Since 2008/09 academic year onwards, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has implemented a set of new immigration measures relaxing certain restrictions in respect of study/curriculum-related internships, part-time on-campus employment and summer jobs for non-local students with the following conditions:

1. **Eligibility of Non-local Students to Take Up Employment in Hong Kong**

   (i) Non-local students of full-time locally-accredited programmes at degree level or above with study period not less than one academic year are allowed to take up study/curriculum-related internships, part-time on-campus employment and summer jobs.

   (ii) Non-local students enrolled in foundation/preparatory year and year zero are not considered as students at degree level or above. Hence, they are not eligible to take up employment of any kind during their foundation/preparatory year.

   (iii) Exchange students are not eligible to take up employment of any kind unless stated otherwise in their student visa.

2. **Important Notes for Non-local Students Taking Up Employment**

Eligible non-local students will individually be issued a "No Objection Letter" (NOL) upon approval of entry and/or extension of stay by the HKSAR
Immigration Department. It spells out the type(s) and conditions of employment that the student may take up, such as:

(i) Study/Curriculum-related Internships
   - The internships must be study/curriculum-related and be arranged or endorsed by the designated officers of the university/programme offering departments.
   - The duration of the internship is up to one academic year, or one-third of the normal duration of the relevant full-time academic programme, whichever is the shorter.
   - The internship cannot take place before a non-local student is officially registered with the university and begins attending any scheduled classes, or once the student has fulfilled all the course/credit requirements for graduation.
   - There is no restriction on the level of salary, work location, and number of working hours.

(ii) Part-time On-campus Employment
   - HKSAR Immigration Department granted part-time on-campus employment up to 20 hours per week throughout the year (Note: all CUHK students, whether they be local or non-local, are only allowed to work on campus for less than 18 hours per week). The unused hours would not be allowed to roll-over from one week to another.

(iii) Summer Jobs
   - Summer employment is allowed from 1 June to 31 August (both dates inclusive).
   - There are no restrictions on the work nature, work location, employers and working hours.

(Source from HKSAR Immigration Department as of 1 June 2011)

Please take note that the above are general conditions set by the HKSAR Immigration Department and individual student may need to clarify their situations with the Immigration Department if in doubt. For more information on recent updates, please visit the HKSAR Immigration Department website the "Guidebook for Entry for Study in Hong Kong" at [http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/id996.htm#VII](http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/id996.htm#VII) and its Frequently Asked Questions webpage at [http://www.immd.gov.hk/zhtml/faq_ipoe.htm](http://www.immd.gov.hk/zhtml/faq_ipoe.htm).

3. Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates (IANG) Policy

Non-local students who have obtained a degree or higher qualification of a full-time and locally accredited programme in Hong Kong may apply to stay/return and work in Hong Kong under the "Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates" (IANG) as stated below:

(i) Non-local graduates who submit applications to the HKSAR Immigration Department within six months after the date of their graduation (i.e. the date
shown on graduation certificate) are classified as non-local fresh graduates. Non-local fresh graduates who wish to apply to stay and work in the HKSAR are not required to secure an offer of employment upon application.

(ii) Non-local graduates who submit applications after six months of the date of their graduation are classified as returning non-local graduates. Returning non-local graduates who wish to return to work in the HKSAR are required to secure an offer of employment upon application. Their applications will be favourably considered so long as the job is at a level commonly taken up by degree holders and the remuneration package is set at market level.

(Source from HKSAR Immigration Department as of 1 June 2011)

For more information and details, please visit the HKSAR Immigration Department website at [http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/id991.htm#II](http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/id991.htm#II).

C. Employment in Hong Kong

Before working in Hong Kong, you should get to know more about the labour legislation, employees' protection and compensation, taxation, and other relevant ordinances in Hong Kong.

1. Labour Legislation

   The Employment Ordinance is the main piece of legislation governing conditions of employment in Hong Kong. It covers a comprehensive range of employment protection and benefits for employees. You can find out more from the following websites:

   (i) Overview of Major Labour Legislation such as Employment Ordinance, Employees' Compensation Ordinance, and Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance: [http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/legislat/contentA.htm](http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/legislat/contentA.htm)

2. Taxation

   Hong Kong is well known for its low and simple taxation structure which levies tax according to the territorial source principle and salaries, profits and property tax are the basic tax types imposed on general public in Hong Kong. You may learn more about the taxation system in Hong Kong via the following websites.

3. Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) System

MPF System is an employment-based retirement protection system launched in December 2000. It is a vital part of retirement support in Hong Kong. The implementation of MPF aims to ensure that those working today will live in reasonable comfort for the years ahead.

In brief, under the MPF Ordinance, if an employer-employee relationship is established and the employment is 60 days or more, the employee is required to enroll in an MPF Scheme. This Ordinance is applicable to both local and non-local residents. You can learn more about the features, coverage, types of MPF schemes etc., through the following Mandatory Provident Fund Authority (MPFA) website at http://www.mpfa.org.hk/english/abt_mpfs/abt_mpfs_fms/abt_mpfs_fms.html.

4. Minimum Wage Ordinance

Starting from 1 May 2011, the Statutory Minimum Wage comes into force in Hong Kong and the initial Statutory Minimum Wage rate is HK$28 per hour. Details are available at Labour Department website (http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/news/mwo.htm). Alongside with the Ordinance, students should take note that the Statutory Minimum Wage does not apply to student interns and work experience students during a period of exempt student employment.

Details on the exemption criteria and the related procedures can be found at the HKSAR Labour Department website "Notes for Student Employees and Employers" (http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/news/pdf/Notes_for_Student_Employees_and_Employers.pdf).

5. Anti-Discrimination Ordinances

In 1996, the Equal Opportunities Commission was set up to implement a series of anti-discrimination ordinances and to work towards the elimination of discrimination of sex, marital status, pregnancy, disability, family status and race on all grounds. These ordinances include the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance, and the Race Discrimination Ordinance. The commission has also issued the "Code of Practice on Employment" at http://www.eoc.org.hk/EOC/GraphicsFolder/CoPs.aspx.
6. Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance

The Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance was brought into force on 20 December 1996. The purpose of the Ordinance is to protect the privacy interests of living individuals in relation to personal data. The Ordinance covers any data relating directly or indirectly to a living individual and applies to any data user that controls the collection, holding, processing or use of personal data. In April 2001, the Code of Practice on Human Resources Management also came into effect, which provides employers and Human Resources Management practitioners with a practical guide to handle employment-related personal data privacy. Detail information can be found at the website of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (http://www.pcpd.org.hk/english/files/ordinance/hrdesp.pdf).

D. Career Planning and Preparation

Good covering letter, résumé and interview can win you a job, while good career planning can help you achieve a fulfilling career life. It is therefore worth investing time and effort in career planning and preparation.

1. Career Planning

Career planning starts from understanding yourself, strengths and weaknesses, values and aspirations. Understanding different occupations and job market, setting achievable career goals and action plans are also essential. More practical advice and useful guide can be found at CPDC’s website (http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/career/planning).

2. Covering Letter and Résumé Writing

(i) When applying jobs, your covering letter and résumé usually give a first impression to employers. They are the first set of tools to win an interview opportunity. The following CPDC’s webpage provides you with tips on making a high impact covering letter and résumé (http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/career/job-searching-skills#Tips%20on%20writing%20a%20covering%20letter).

(ii) CPDC has developed an e-learning portal called Careers E-coach. It allows students to learn the essential soft-skills for job hunting anytime around the clock. You can logon through this link http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/career/e-coach.

3. Interviewing Skills

(i) Effective interviewing skills can win the job you want. The following CPDC’s webpage provides you with useful tips and advice on successful job interviews (http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/career/interview-skills). Also,
the Careers E-coach offers a module on Interview Skills that you may find useful (http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/career/e-coach).

(ii) During term-time, CPDC organizes various career preparation seminars and mock interview workshops. You can stay tune to the latest news and events at CPDC’s website and daily email announcements.

4. Research on Salary and Employment Trends in Hong Kong

Salaries vary across different industries and companies. The following salary indexes and employment market reports may give you rough ideas and references:

(i) Salary Index from Career Times

(ii) Salary Index from South China Morning Post (2012)

(iii) Latest Economic Reports on Labour Market by HKSAR (2012)

(iv) Employment and Human Resources Trends in Hong Kong

Press Releases at Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management (HKIHRM)
http://www.hkihrm.org/ihrm_eng/ih_pre.asp

Reports from Hudson Hong Kong
http://au.hudson.com/salary-guide

5. Placement/Recruitment Cycle

The recruitment season starts as early as September. CPDC invites recruiters from different industries to conduct recruitment talks. Students are encouraged to attend these talks and meet the recruiters in person to know more about different industries and companies. For postgraduate students of 1-year programme, it means that you should start paying attention to recruitment information and attend recruitment talks, and have your résumé and covering letter ready once your first term starts. The following recruitment cycle is for your reference:
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6. **Job Searching on Internet**

   It is common to search job opportunities through websites. Some job searching engines can browse jobs by industry, job function or keywords. Some even support online job applications. You can find a list of job searching engines on CUHK Library System’s webpage at [http://www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/Common/Reader/News>ShowNews.jsp?Nid=21776&Pid=15&Version=0&Cid=827](http://www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/Common/Reader/News>ShowNews.jsp?Nid=21776&Pid=15&Version=0&Cid=827).

   You can also find job opportunities that are open exclusively to CUHK students at CU Job Link ([http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/login](http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/login)).

7. **Points to Note in Job Hunting Process**

   During the job hunting process, you may come across uncertainties and doubts. CPDC has gathered some common points that you should be aware of and considered at [http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/career/points-to-note-in-job-hunting-process](http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/career/points-to-note-in-job-hunting-process).

8. **Beware of Employment Traps**

   In job hunting process, candidates should be alert of employment traps. One should be mindful of the nature of job, your capability in doing the job, unreasonable high paying jobs and "blind" recruitment advertisements, etc. Consultation with the Career Advisors at CPDC, related HKSAR departments like the Labour Department or even Police may be necessary. The following websites provide you with more advice on employment traps and situations that you should be alert:

(i) [http://www1.jobs.gov.hk/1/0/WebForm/information/en/ig/jh_bc/ig_jh_info_4.aspx](http://www1.jobs.gov.hk/1/0/WebForm/information/en/ig/jh_bc/ig_jh_info_4.aspx)

(ii) [http://www.pcpd.org.hk/english/enquiries/questions_ad.html](http://www.pcpd.org.hk/english/enquiries/questions_ad.html)

(iii) [http://www.police.gov.hk/info/img/Employment_Fraud/Employment_Fraud_1.jpg](http://www.police.gov.hk/info/img/Employment_Fraud/Employment_Fraud_1.jpg)
E. **Tips for Working in Local Market**

1. What Hong Kong Employers Require From Non-local Candidates?

   The majority of Hong Kong employers prefer employees with a global mindset, initiatives, good analytical ability and high language proficiency. Ideal candidates should also be enthusiastic and adaptive to change.

   As non-local students possess special knowledge, skills, qualifications, exposure and network that may be of great use to companies with China business or intended to get into the China market, these companies would prefer to hire non-local graduates.

2. Recommendations from the Career Planning and Development Centre

   (i) As a non-local student, you should discover and elaborate the reasons why you would like to work in Hong Kong, your level of determination and commitment to work in Hong Kong through your interaction with the potential employer.

   (ii) You should have good understanding of local culture and the city itself. This could be enhanced through active participation in different social activities and networking events and interaction with local people. Having practical work experience locally also helps a lot. Hence, you should strive to look for more internship opportunities.

   (iii) In addition to academic study, you should pay attention to global and local issues by reading newspapers, magazines, and through internet and develop your personal views or stance on these issues.

   (iv) High proficiency in languages comes before interpersonal and communication skills. Students with good English will definitely stand out during interviews for it is easier for them to present their ideas, which leaves the potential employer a good impression.

   (v) In addition to possessing good English proficiency, you should also pick up Cantonese and Putonghua, as appropriate; as Cantonese is the common office language in Hong Kong, while Putonghua is gaining importance in Hong Kong. It would lower the communication barrier with locals within the organization and able you to mingle with your fellow colleagues more easily.

   In CUHK, the English Language Teaching Unit and the Chinese Language Centre offer language courses for its students and The Independent Learning Centre is very resourceful and offers different kinds of activities for students to enhance their language proficiency.

   (vi) Having more discussions with teachers and fellow students can enhance your presentation skills, self-confidence and analytical ability.

   (vii) By attending recruitment talks and joining guidance programmes organized by the CPDC, you can gain more understanding on local employment market and polish your job hunting skills suitable for the Hong Kong market.

   (viii) You should be familiar with the immigration and employment policies and regulations for non-local students/graduates work in Hong Kong, as some
employers may be inexperienced or have no experience in hiring non-locals.

(ix) Doing research on local employment market situation and identifying manpower gaps that favour non-locals will surely maximize your chance of finding local employment.

3. **Work Culture in Hong Kong and Workplace Culture**

(i) Hong Kong is well known as a fast-paced, exciting and energetic place. With a population pre-dominated by local Chinese and a history under British rule, Hong Kong culture combines Chinese traditions and Western values and ways of life. Not surprisingly, the Chinese concept of face saving, line of authority and personal relationship still stand in most Hong Kong business and work practice. Yet, the western value of equality has a significant standing in Hong Kong.

(ii) Gift giving can be part of business etiquette. You may find business associates exchange gifts on festivals or special occasions in Hong Kong. However, one must be mindful that gift giving must comply with the organization’s code of conduct and the anti-corruption laws enforced by Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

(iii) In general, Hong Kong people are hardworking, diligent, and commit to work. Working long hours is very common. Work efficiency is also high. Besides, Hong Kong’s work culture is often described as result-oriented. It is not difficult to find that candidates should be able to work under pressure in job advertisements.

(iv) While work culture describes the work practice in a broader sense, workplace culture can be defined as the "way of life" for those in a particular workplace within an organization. This includes organization structure, power relationships, norms, rituals and conventions, etc. Workplace culture varies from different sectors, industries, and professions. In some cases, the workplace culture could be observed during the interview process. You are encouraged to get more clues from the interview, office environment, staff behavior and during the first few months at work. It will speed up the adaptation process.

4. **Non-local Candidates' Strengths/Weaknesses As Compared to Locals**

Being a non-local candidate, what are your strengths and weaknesses compared to the locals in job hunting and working in Hong Kong? What are your cutting edges? These are the questions you must always ask yourself from the very beginning of job hunting process. Despite individual differences, some suggestions are found in the "Employers Report on the Development of Mainland Talents in Hong Kong".

The full version "Employers Report on the Development of Mainland Talents in Hong Kong" conducted by Hong Kong Association of Mainland Graduates can be found at [http://www.hkamg.org/employer.pdf](http://www.hkamg.org/employer.pdf).
F. Experience Sharing from Mainland Alumni

Apart from considering advice from Career Planning and Development Centre, when you consider working in Hong Kong after graduation, experiences from alumni may be of interest to you. The following mainland alumni shared their first-hand experience and suggestions in their articles:

1. Sharing "Paint Your Own Rainbow" by He Chun, Master of Science in New Media, CUHK 2010: [http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/Students-Sharing/HeChun](http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/Students-Sharing/HeChun)

2. Sharing by Li Zi Mu, MPhil in Economics, CUHK 2006: [http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/Students-Sharing/LiZiMu](http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/student/Students-Sharing/LiZiMu)


G. Frequently Asked Questions

**Q1: Am I a non-local student? What defines me as a non-local student? What kind of employment policy do I need to follow if I am defined as a non-local student?**

A1: A "non-local student" is defined as one who requires a student visa to study in Hong Kong. For the related employment policy, you can refer to Section A "Employment Policy for Non-local Students in Hong Kong" of this toolkit.

**Q2: I am a non-local student currently at preparatory year of the full-time degree programme? Can I work to help finance my studies?**

A2: According to the HKSAR Immigration Department policy, non-local students of full-time locally-accredited programmes at degree level or above with study period not less than one academic year are eligible to take up the specified employment. For non-local students at foundation/preparatory year and year zero are not considered as students at degree or above level and are not eligible to take up employment of any kind. For further details, you can refer to Section A "Employment Policy for Non-local Students in Hong Kong" of this toolkit.

**Q3: What is the meaning of "on-campus employment"?**

A3: According to the HKSAR Immigration Department, "on-campus employment" means that the employment must take place within the campus of the institution (i.e. CUHK) where the non-local student is studying or, if the work location is outside campus of the institution, the employer is the institution itself.

**Q4: How does a No Objection Letter (NOL) look like? I think I have lost it. Can I get a replacement NOL if the original one has been lost, damaged or defaced?**

A4: You can find a No Objection Letter (NOL) sample for reference through this link ([http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/files/alumni-and-staff/Non-Local%20Students%20Internship%20Record/Appendix_1_NOL.pdf](http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/files/alumni-and-staff/Non-Local%20Students%20Internship%20Record/Appendix_1_NOL.pdf)). If you lost your NOL, you can contact HKSAR Immigration Department for a replacement. For mainland students, you may request the Quality Migrants and Mainland Residents Section for the issuance of a fresh NOL at no fee. For other non-local students, you may approach the
**Q5:** I can't speak Cantonese. Will it lessen my chance in finding jobs in Hong Kong?

A5: Hong Kong being an international city, English and Chinese (Cantonese and Putonghua) are commonly used in most workplace. Although Cantonese is the mother tongue of most local people in Hong Kong, different employers may have different language requirements and needs, thus not knowing Cantonese may not be a disadvantage to some employers. However, knowing Cantonese will certainly give you an advantage when you live in Hong Kong. It can lower your communication barrier with locals at workplace as well as in daily life. Cantonese courses are available for students to join. It is a good way to learn about the language which allows you to settle in Hong Kong easier.

**Q6:** Where can I look for jobs in Hong Kong?

A6: The most common channel to find jobs in Hong Kong is through recruitment advertisements. Recruitment advertisements can be found on various media such as newspapers, magazines, radio and online portals. Besides, some large organizations also look out for fresh talents through its website, careers fairs and events. Hence, you should take initiative to join these events and meet employers face to face. For some organizations and niche professions, they seldom openly advertise and often rely on staff referral or word of mouth when looking for new recruits. So if you know someone working in an organization that interests you, ask them to update you on vacancies or help you to forward your résumé to the human resources department.

**Q7:** I have received an internship opportunity during term time from the commercial industry, what should I do next if I want to take up this internship employment?

A7: Before accepting an internship or part-time off-campus employment, students are requested to seek prior approval from their respective faculty (or department). All non-local students taking up off-campus employment/internship should apply for an approval from the HKSAR Immigration Department, students concerned should submit all documents as required, including the employment contract and the No Objection Letter (NOL), to their faculty or department office for issuing an endorsement letter. Upon receiving the endorsement letter from the faculty or department, you may then go to the HKSAR Immigration Department and apply for the work approval by presenting the endorsement letter, employment contract and the NOL. More information about NOL can be found at Section A "Employment Policy for Non-local Students in Hong Kong" of this toolkit.

**Q8:** Can I take up summer employment when I have officially finished my study at CUHK, but have yet to receive my proof of graduation?

A8: According to guidelines issued by the HKSAR Immigration Department, when the student concerned has fulfilled all the course/credit requirements for graduation, he/she is considered as a graduate. And therefore the study/curriculum-related internship or summer employment under the relaxation can no longer take place. For a graduate, a proper visa should be obtained before taking up any employment.
Q9: This is my final year study in CUHK and I have received a graduate offer of which the commencement date is in June, what can I do since I do not have a work permit?

A9: Persons who have obtained a degree or higher qualification in a full-time and locally accredited programme in Hong Kong may apply to stay/return and work in Hong Kong under the Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates (IANG). Upon receiving the proof of graduation in July, students may apply for the IANG from the HKSAR Immigration Department which allows them to stay in Hong Kong for 12 months. Students can only commence work if a valid IANG can be presented. You may need to discuss with your potential employer of the possible start date.

Q10: Can Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates (IANG) application be done by authorized person?

A10: According to the HKSAR Immigration Department, the application of Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates (IANG) can be submitted by the applicant or his/her sponsor/reference either in person or by post to the Hong Kong Immigration Department. For application procedures, please refer to the HKSAR Immigration Department website at [http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/id991.htm#II](http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/id991.htm#II) or call its telephone hotline at 2824 6111.

Q11: The employer requires me to provide proof of graduation at CUHK before my graduation certificate is available. What should I do?

A11: The proof of graduation, in normal case, would be available by July given that you have fulfilled all the course/credit requirements for graduation in second term. Should students require a proof prior to this, you can apply for a Letter of Certification at a fee. This is a letter to certify a student’s current status in the University with details of date of admission, programme, expected date of graduation, etc. For application details, please approach the Graduate Office (for postgraduates) or the Registry (for undergraduates).
H. Useful Websites

- Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority (MPFA)  [http://www.mpfa.org.hk](http://www.mpfa.org.hk)
- Career Planning and Development Centre (CPDC), CUHK  [http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk](http://cpdc.osa.cuhk.edu.hk)
- Hong Kong Association of Mainland Graduates (HKAMG)  [http://www.hkamg.org](http://www.hkamg.org)
- Postgraduate Student Association of CUHK (CUPSA)  [http://cupsa.cuhk.edu.hk](http://cupsa.cuhk.edu.hk)

References

- Hong Kong Association of Mainland Graduates (HKAMG) at [http://www.hkamg.org](http://www.hkamg.org)
- Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management (HKIHRM) at [http://www.hkihrm.org](http://www.hkihrm.org)
- Classified Post at [http://www.classifiedpost.com](http://www.classifiedpost.com)
- Hudson at [http://hk.hudson.com](http://hk.hudson.com)

Disclaimer: Information in this toolkit is drawn from various sources and relevant websites. As information may change from time to time, you are advised to refer to relevant official sources and websites regularly for updates.