Peer Counselors are a group of dedicated and respectful students who are trained to reach out to their peers to provide support and companionship.

**Caring Projects Exhibition**

One of the missions of Peer Counselors is to build a warm, supportive and caring university campus. Over the past year, Peer Counselors have contributed a variety of ideas in supporting different student groups through fascinating and creative events. Appreciation to our kind, loving and generous Peer Counselors who have made our campus better!
“Happy Living”
Peer Counselor Training Program
Caring Projects Exhibition

Wellbeing and Support of RPG Students

Our team conducted a survey from 11 to 16 Apr 2019 and collected 93 valid replies from RPG students. Analysis had been done according to their self-declared daily stress level: high stress (n=30); moderate stress (n=63); low stress (n=0).

Support Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Stress (30)</th>
<th>Moderate Stress (63)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of supportive persons</td>
<td>2.98 persons</td>
<td>3.42 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent with friends</td>
<td>4.47 hrs/week</td>
<td>5.22 hrs/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts with family</td>
<td>3.97 times/month</td>
<td>4.09 times/month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 Comparison of High Stress VS Moderate Stress groups under the “Support Network” aspect.
"Happy Living" Peer Counselor Training Program Caring Projects Exhibition

**Work-Life Balance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>High Stress (30)</th>
<th>Moderate Stress (63)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rest days</td>
<td>0.82 days/week</td>
<td>1.07 days/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent on hobbies</td>
<td>1.92 hrs/week</td>
<td>3.59 hrs/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life balance satisfaction</td>
<td>No 77%</td>
<td>Yes 30% No 32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Comparison of High Stress VS Moderate Stress groups under the “Work-life Balance” aspect.

**Integration To HKUST Life**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>High Stress (30)</th>
<th>Moderate Stress (63)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with research team</td>
<td>1.67/4</td>
<td>2.52/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of university activities</td>
<td>2.85/5</td>
<td>3.55/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging</td>
<td>1.7/10</td>
<td>4.6/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Comparison of High Stress VS Moderate Stress groups under the “Integration to HKUST Life” aspect.
Figure 4 Comparison of High Stress VS Moderate Stress groups under the “Stress Coping” aspect.

Analysis:

1) In terms of support network, it was discovered that the better the support network, the lower the perceived stress level of our RPG students. 

2) In terms of work-life balance, it was alarming to see that 77% of the High Stress group was not satisfied with their work-life balance, whereas 32% of the Moderate Stress group felt the same. Number of rest days per week and time spent on hobbies could possibly be some of the indicators for students’ work-life balance satisfaction. 

3) In terms of integration to HKUST life, there was a significant difference in sense of belonging to HKUST between the High Stress group (1.7 out of 10) and the Moderate Stress group (4.6 out of 10). Findings from our survey suggested that relationship with research team and awareness of university activities could have positive correlation with the perceived sense of belonging of our RPG students. 

4) In terms of stress coping, the High Stress group and the Moderate Stress group were choosing similar proportion of adaptive stress coping methods (78% vs 80% respectively).

Recommendations:

1) RPG students are suggested to enhance their support network and work-life balance, as well as be more proactive in participating in HKUST activities, in order to improve their overall wellbeing amidst their busy research study life. 

2) Supervisors and administrators are suggested to better address RPG students’ needs by evaluating their work-life balance, research team dynamics and involvement to university activities.

3) List of adaptive stress coping activities include: social activities with friends; sports; watching movies; listening / singing / playing music and playing games.

4) Other suggestions by fellow RPG students: sleeping; eating; photography; shopping; praying.
“Happy Living” Peer Counselor Training Program Caring Project Exhibition

Relaxation Room

Welcome to our Relaxation Room project held during the Final Exam period in 2018-19 Spring Term! Our Relaxation Room aimed to provide a private space for our fellow schoolmates to release their pressure.

Students could do whatever they want with their friends in the room within a 30 minutes session. We have provided various tools for them to engage in. They could choose to vent their anger on the punch bag, release their pressure through mics and songs they love, simply go for games with the table football or have quick refreshment.

Punch bag Table football Karaoke

To ensure safety, we provided boxing gloves, soft texture toys and enough space for them. The feedback of the activity was very positive. More than 60 students walked in and enjoyed a 30 minutes rest time in their whole day long revision.
"Happy Living" Peer Counselor Training Program Caring Project Exhibition

Words from Peer Counselors:

Anson (SSCI, Yr 2)

The Peer Counselor activities were fun and enjoyable. Preparing for the Relaxation Room was a huge brainstorm. Each of us provided a bunch of ideas and we combined them. This experience was unique. We chose the most relaxing activities to put into the room, such as punch bag, karaoke and table football. On the other hand, I learnt how to show care and consider action to our peers. I met many new friends during the activity. Interaction with them was the most impressed part among the whole experience.

Crystal (SSCI, Yr 2)

It was a wonderful experience organizing the caring project last semester. My groupmates and I prepared a Relaxation Room for students. In the Relaxation Room, there were karaoke, a punch bag and sleep capsules. Students could rest or do sports to alleviate their stress during the final exam period. I saw they left the room with laughter and smiles. Also, it was a great opportunity for me to organize the activity with my groupmates. I learnt and enjoyed a lot.

Queenie (SBM, Yr 2)

I could still remember how excited my groupmates and I were when we first thought of the idea of a Relaxation Room. We discussed the types and quantity of materials needed, venue, date and time, etc. We held a Relaxation Room in the Counseling and Wellness Center during the final exam period. The response from students was better than I expected. I felt delighted when I saw their smiling faces when leaving the room. I believe everyone needs time to release stress. It felt much better after they visited the Relaxation Room.
This was a campaign that allowed students to express their emotions and enhanced interactions between Peer Counselors and the HKUST community.

We made beautiful postcards for students to share their feelings and thoughts. Our group members then sent out replies to each participant within two weeks’ time to show support and encouragement.

The first round took place right before the midterm break and the second round was held during the final exam period. We received around 95 postcards in total.

The responses were quite positive and it met our expectation for the activity perfectly. As we wrote the replies to individual students, we had a better understanding of what they were going through at that time and it helped us to care more about our peers in HKUST anonymously.
“Happy Living”
Peer Counselor Training Program
Caring Project Exhibition

Words from Peer Counselors:

**Veronica (BBA, Yr 2)**

As a Peer Counselor, the best thing was the moment when I saw people trusted our identity and reached out to us for help. When we organized the Pen-pal activity, I enjoyed the moments when people finished the cards and handed them back to me. I felt happy to have these opportunities to help others.

**Wing (BSCHS, Yr 1)**

When I responded to the postcards, I was happy to see many people were willing to share their feelings and experiences. I was also glad to share my feelings and some positive values with them!

**Colby (BSCHS, Yr 3)**

Through the Pen-pal event, I had a chance to connect with my schoolmates through writing postcards. It was a precious experience for me as many people shared their secrets and concerns to me. I remembered one of them said Pen-pal event provided a “safe” platform for her to seek for peers’ help, as she was not required to express her feelings to us in person.

**Jennifer (BSCHS, Yr 2)**

Personally speaking, it was so meaningful and satisfied to be a Peer Counselor. We tried our best to communicate with people and helped them to realize the positive side of our lives.