

An aerial view of a historic city street, likely in Oxford, England. The scene is dominated by red-tiled roofs and ornate stone buildings. A prominent feature is a tall, white church spire with a green patina on its top. In the foreground, a building with a black and white timber-framed facade is visible. The street is busy with pedestrians and a red double-decker bus. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

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Starting out

国外的大学生活和我们的大学生活有什么不同？世界各地的大学新生入学时是否都面临相似的问题？

在异地求学的大学生应该怎样调节思乡、孤独和自我怀疑等情绪？应该如何规划自己的学习和生活？怎样才能平衡学业发展和社会交往的关系？

本单元将带你步入不同国度的大学校园，向你介绍国外大学生的生活方式、学习习惯、业余活动，让你领略知名高校的历史发展、人文特色，为你搭建了解世界各国同龄人的平台。大学是人生的一个重要转折点，丰富精彩，令人期待。让我们做好准备，开始新的生活吧！

Starting out in America

Chen Dong

Chen Dong is the champion of the 2006 CCTV Cup English Speaking Contest. He graduated from Wuhan University in 2008, with a GPA ranked number one in his graduating class, and went on to Yale University to continue his studies.

When I first came to the US for graduate studies, many amusing things happened to me. I guess it was all part of what people call “culture shock”. My first shock came after I bought a bike – the first of several items that I bought after arriving at Yale. After a few days, the brakes became loose and I went to a bike garage to have them tightened. I asked the guy there how much it would cost. To my complete disbelief, he said, “16 bucks.” Weakly, I asked, “Well, the brakes only need a little adjustment. Why is it so expensive?” “We provide a service and we get paid. That’s why,” he said flatly. “Fair enough,” I thought, “but 16 dollars is over 100 RMB and I could probably buy a new bike for that in China.” So I left the garage without fixing the brakes. Instead, I rode my bike to Walmart. There I found a nicely made 18-piece tool set that included pliers (钳子), wrenches (扳手), screwdrivers (螺丝刀), and a hammer for just 14 dollars. I tightened the brakes by myself, and it gave me a strange but good feeling of satisfaction. Years later, the bike is worn out, but I still own the tool set and use it from time to time.

Besides repairing bikes, I also learnt to do many other things by myself during my stay in America. For example, several days after I fixed my bike, I refused to pay 19 dollars to have my suit pressed at a laundrette and instead bought a steam iron for 12 dollars. I managed to figure out how to press suits by myself. In the years that followed, I picked up cooking, replaced bulbs in my car, and even fixed a toilet.

I was far from alone in this, though. Many Americans love doing household maintenance and repair work by themselves. They call it DIY, or do-it-yourself.

Gradually, I realized that DIY is not just about saving money; it is also about having fun. It was a clear, breezy summer night when the TV in my apartment suddenly stopped working. We were about to send for a professional to check it out when two

of my roommates decided that they wanted to have a try first. Both of them were PhD students, one in Physics and the other in Electrical Engineering. The next day, they brought back a handful of tools from their lab and disassembled (拆开) the TV. They sat on the floor, just like two kids playing with model ships, and poked and prodded the TV while discussing which part of it might have gone wrong. As a biologist, I did not understand a thing they were saying, but they were clearly excited. By the end of the day, the TV was working again. I asked them how they had managed it. Again, I didn't really understand what they were saying, but I could tell how proud they were.

Americans in general take great interest and pride in DIY. Obviously, labour is expensive in the US and DIY is a way of saving money. However, DIY is also a way of accomplishing something; you need to think clearly and independently to figure out a solution. This is probably why DIY is so popular in America and why many people think DIY is part of the American national identity.



CULTURE LEARNING

“The principal goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done.”

Jean Piaget (1896–1980), Swiss psychologist and philosopher

INTRODUCTION

For the majority of the world’s students, school is a manageable distance from home. However, it is very common to see students moving to a different city when college time arrives. In some cultures, like in the US and the UK, students usually move to another city, sometimes even if there’s a university in their home town. The reason for this is that at this time young people are looking forward to independence from their parents and are eager to experience the world with more autonomy (自主权).

College years undoubtedly form some of the most memorable times in a person’s life. It is when great friendships are established and young people experience the importance of living in a community. It is a time to increase one’s self-knowledge and get to know one’s abilities and limitations. Trying to find a balance between their social life and their academic performance is a challenge for some students, especially because college years are full of parties and gatherings. The social aspect of college plays an important role in students’ development. They will meet people from different cultures and might face culture clashes. All of this could eventually be very beneficial because it could shape the way students make sense of the world around them, potentially making them more tolerant and open-minded.

Sometimes, there might also be challenging moments of homesickness, loneliness, and self-doubt. Homesickness can happen when students feel detached (分开的) from their culture, family, and past life. It is not uncommon among college students, but it’s something that most people overcome. When feeling homesick, students may experience increased levels of anxiety, sadness, physical distress, and even depression. One way to avoid this is to go back home as much as possible, during extended breaks like Easter and Christmas. But for students living far away, perhaps even in another country, this is impractical. So, while in college, the best way to avoid homesickness is to get involved in the social opportunities that college life presents. By joining sports clubs and Students’ Unions, and doing voluntary work and other activities, students move their thoughts away from home and focus on the positive aspects of college life.

It is also very important to seek emotional support. This can be done by talking about your feelings with close friends or by looking for advice from more experienced people. Some colleges will assign each student a personal tutor or have counsellors available who can also help overcome these feelings.

All in all, college prepares you for adult life: responsibility, hard work, community, challenges, and – of course – a bit of fun!

CULTURE POINTS

Integrated Course

Active reading (1) ▼

1 Hall of residence

In university towns, it is common for students to live in a hall of residence on campus. Normally, when accepted by the university, students will indicate whether they would like on-campus accommodation. They will then apply for a place and it might be the case that they aren't accepted because the demand may be very high. In some colleges, such as those of the University of Oxford, all students are allocated (分配) a room for the first year of undergraduate courses.

In London-based universities, for example, there are many student halls outside university premises (房屋及土地). Both in London and elsewhere, students can also rent their own flats, but this means they have to organize and pay their own bills, often for the first time in their lives. A house share is a common arrangement among students. In a shared house, students from different places and even different universities will live together. There can be as few as two or three students, and as many as six, or even more. It is up to each student to decide how they want to live.



2 Coffee morning

A coffee morning is a form of social event that can be used as a way of welcoming new students to a department. The event allows people of different ages and backgrounds to talk in a relaxed environment. A coffee morning is also a popular event held on special occasions to raise money for charity. Universities also hold afternoon and evening events, such as mixers (联谊会), themed parties or fancy dress parties (化装舞会) (also called costume parties), and cheese and wine socials.

3 Tutor

A tutor is a teaching assistant, usually with a first degree (本科学位), who is allowed to teach a seminar or class for undergraduate students, or privately paid extra lessons to individual students at school.

However, tutors have a specific function in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge where they are senior teaching members of a college who specialize in a particular academic field (Chemistry, Physics, English, Economics, Law etc). They conduct tutorials, which are classes with a small number of students, maybe only one or two, during which students read their assignments aloud and discuss them.

Tutors and the tutorial system are key features of “Oxbridge” teaching. It’s a highly effective method, and extremely influential if students have close access to experts in their field of study. Tutors at Oxford and Cambridge will also look after the personal welfare of their students, and make sure students are not suffering from stress or working too hard.

4 Lecture and seminar

Teaching at universities usually takes the form of a lecture or seminar. A lecture is a presentation made by a professor who will present their knowledge of the subject and then take questions from students. It is the least interactive form of instruction, but the most common one because it means many students can be put together in the same session. Seminars are more interactive, with students preparing material beforehand and then revealing their arguments and understanding of the subject during the session.

5 Reading list

A reading list is given to students before the start of a university course. It is a good idea to read as much as possible beforehand because when the course starts, things get very busy. Each professor will assign the essential reading for their own subject, which may contain a fixed textbook to be used during the term. Professors will indicate which chapters are to be read and will complement reading with handouts, journal articles, and Internet material. It is also common that students are asked to read some material before a lesson, lecture, or tutorial. This is extremely important so students can engage in discussions with the professor and other students, and therefore get the most benefit from each lesson.

中国的大学老师也会给本科高年级学生和研究生布置“阅读书目”，这主要是为了让学生利用课外时间汲取更多的知识。学生可将所列图书进行粗略分类，在每类中找出一本最根本、最经典且便于阅读的书籍来仔细阅读并做好笔记。之后，将书目中其他同类书籍与这本经典著作进行对比，不用细读，只需关注它们之间的不同点即可。读完之后，要写读书报告，提炼各书的观点，并形成自己的观点。



6 Bell-ringing

In England, bell-ringing started in the 7th century, and today it is a common sound coming from a church tower before or after a service or wedding. During the reign of James II (1685–1688), bell-ringing became very fashionable among the aristocracy (贵族) for its physical and intellectual stimulation.

Bell-ringing

7 Students' Union

The Students' Union (or simply the Union) is usually a building at the centre of the university, and may offer a canteen or bar, and meeting rooms for student activities and some student support services, like counselling and careers advice. The Students' Union as an organization will also organize its own social events, like balls and festivals, and may be responsible for managing and funding student clubs and societies. The Union may also fund a students' magazine or newspaper, even though most university papers are independent and can report on whatever they choose. In many countries, students must become a member of the Union and will have to pay a small fee for this. In exchange, they receive services and support, and may also receive discounts and special offers in university towns by showing their membership card.

The Students' Union also exists to promote and defend students' rights and interests, and will organize demonstrations and campaigns, or lobby (游说) local or national governments. The Union often has a representative in the university's administration, which means the student voice will be heard. Students can usually vote for their representatives every year. The Students' Union is a prominent feature of universities in the UK, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, and India, and has a strong political tradition. In the US, Student Governments or Associations have a similar role to Students' Unions.

Active reading (2) ▼

8 Formal education

Formal education is education organized and structured by governments and institutions. It is largely classroom-based and instruction is given by trained teachers. Generally speaking, formal education in the West gives more importance to mathematics and the sciences than to other subjects, but it also aims to foster students' creativity and ingenuity. At both primary and secondary levels (the compulsory years of education), assessment is through a combination of examinations and coursework. This takes into account different learner types and is considered by many to be fairer as students' grades are not so heavily reliant on their ability to perform under the pressure of exam conditions.

9 Limerick

Limerick is a city in the Republic of Ireland. Limerick has a vibrant (充满活力的) nightlife with music clubs, bars, comedy and more. It has many historic buildings, such as King John's Castle (completed around 1200) and St Mary's Cathedral (built in 1168).

10 Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland

The United Kingdom is made up of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland has been a separate country since the early 20th century when an agreement was signed to establish its independence while keeping Northern Ireland as part of the UK. There are many people who want to see all of Ireland independent from the UK. It is more of a political conflict than a religious one, but historically this traces to the Catholics (天主教徒) wanting a separate country, and the Protestants (新教徒) being in favour of Ireland forming part of the UK.

11 The English Reformation

The English Reformation was a religious and political movement in the 16th century aimed at reforming certain practices of the Catholic Church. One of the main arguments, initiated by Martin Luther (马丁·路德), was that all believers have the same access to God, as opposed to the highly hierarchical (等级制的) structure of the Catholic Church. It was in this period that the Church of England was formed and became independent of the Vatican (罗马教廷) in religious matters. The king at this time was Henry VIII, who is famous for having six wives. Henry wanted to marry his mistress, Anne Boleyn, and asked the Pope to end his marriage with his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. The Pope refused to give Henry an annulment (宣告<婚约>无效), so the king used this opportunity to break free from Rome and the Catholic Church. Henry then married Anne and became the Supreme Head of the Church of England. Henry continued his war against the Catholic Church through the dissolution (解散) of the monasteries (修道院), where land owned by Catholics was broken up and sold. This returned power to the king and raised money to finance the war against France.



Henry VIII

英国的宗教改革还与亨利八世 (Henry VIII) 的子嗣有密切关系。他去世后, 其年幼的长子爱德华六世 (Edward VI) 继位, 期间 (1547-1553) 主要由主张新教的摄政委员会执政, 新教受到保护。爱德华六世去世后, 玛丽一世 (Mary I) 继位, 她的母亲就是亨利八世的原配凯瑟琳 (Catherine), 所以玛丽一世在位期间 (1553-1558) 曾大肆屠杀新教高级领导 (因此她被称为“血腥玛丽”)。英国的宗教改革走入低谷, 直到其同父异母的妹妹伊丽莎白一世 (Elizabeth I) 接替王位后 (1558-1603), 新教在英国的地位才逐渐被确立起来。伊丽莎白一世的母亲就是亨利八世当年要续娶的安妮·博林 (Anne Boleyn)。

Listening and Speaking

Inside view ▼

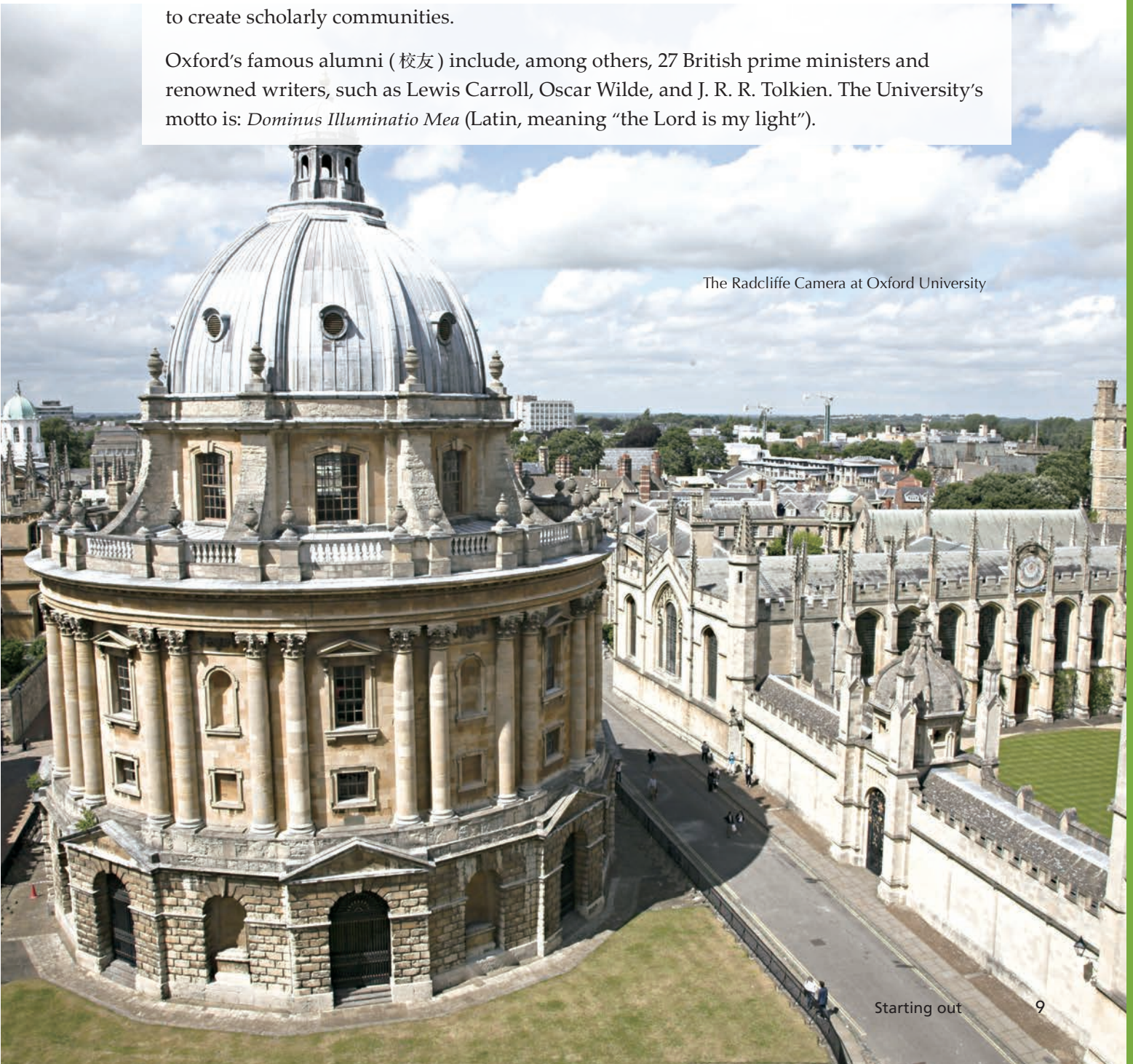
Conversation 1

1 The University of Oxford

It is unknown when the University of Oxford was established, but evidence indicates that teaching started in the 11th century, making Oxford the oldest university in the English-speaking world. The first colleges were funded by private benefactors (捐助者) who wished to create scholarly communities.

Oxford's famous alumni (校友) include, among others, 27 British prime ministers and renowned writers, such as Lewis Carroll, Oscar Wilde, and J. R. R. Tolkien. The University's motto is: *Dominus Illuminatio Mea* (Latin, meaning "the Lord is my light").

The Radcliffe Camera at Oxford University



2 Colleges at the University of Oxford

There are 38 colleges at the University of Oxford, each one with students' accommodation, clubs, a library, a dining room, and other facilities. For an undergraduate degree, most colleges offer most courses, but a student may have lectures and laboratory work with students from other colleges too. This is because the name of the college has no relation to the majors it teaches. So an English major and a Geography major can be part of the same college and share the facilities mentioned above. When applying, students can name the college they prefer or leave it open. Even if students apply to a particular college, other colleges may want to interview them if they have made a strong application.

牛津大学成立伊始，英国教会处于绝对的强势地位，所以当时成立的学院要首先得到教会的认可，继而才能得到社会的资助和认同。基于这个原因，各学院在起名的时候，就采用了很多与宗教相关的人名来作为学院的名字。此外，还有少数是以主要资助者的名字命名的，比如牛津的巴利奥尔学院（Balliol College）就是约翰·巴利奥尔（John de Balliol）在达勒姆郡主教（Bishop of Durham）的支持下建立的。牛津大学的学院并不以专业命名，不代表学生所学专业，这与中国大学命名学院的方式不同。

3 Hertford College

Hertford College is one of the constituent colleges of the University of Oxford. Literature and the arts have always been strong in the college, with two famous alumni in these areas being Thomas Hobbes, who wrote *Leviathan* (《利维坦》) while at Magdalen Hall (later Hertford College), and Jonathan Swift, who wrote numerous satires (讽刺作品) including *Gulliver's Travels* (《格列佛游记》). The college's architectural icon is the Hertford Bridge, which connects two parts of the college with an enclosed arch. It is popularly known as the Bridge of Sighs (叹息桥) despite neither being inspired by nor bearing resemblance to the original in Venice.

Hertford's progressive approach made it one of the first colleges in Oxford to go mixed (to take men and women), and to attract a large number of students from state schools.

The Bridge of Sighs of Hertford College



4

It is common to use a person's first name as the mode of address in many UK universities. In more traditional subjects and contexts, tutors and professors may be addressed by their title and family name, eg Professor Lowe or Dr Suarez. The best idea is to see how British students address the professors and do the same. "Sir" and "Madam" are not used very often in universities.

需要注意的是：在大学里，学生称呼教师时，不使用性别称谓，即不使用“Miss”，“Ms”和“Mr”。这些称谓在中小学校里常被学生用来称呼自己的老师，主要是因为这些老师通常没有高学历。一般说来，如果中小学教师具有博士学位，学生也应该用其学历来称呼，以表尊重，如“Dr + 姓氏”。如果教师也用“Dr + 姓氏”自称，则表示权威。

Conversation 3

5 Dining hall

The use of the dining hall varies from college to college. Sometimes it is possible to have all three meals in the hall, and at other times only breakfast and lunch are served, with dinnertime reserved for special occasions. Special dinners happen when there is an important visitor, such as a guest speaker, and when there's a special event or festival such as Christmas. Halls offer cooked and continental breakfast (欧式早餐, 以冷食为主), as well as cereals (谷类食品). For lunch, there is a choice of meat, vegetables, salad, and dessert. The Great Hall of Christ Church College was used as inspiration for the Hogwarts (霍格沃茨魔法学校) dining hall in the Harry Potter films. The staircase leading up to the hall, as well as other locations around the college, was used as a filming location in many scenes.

The Great Hall of Christ Church College



Outside view ▼

6 Somerville College

When it was founded in 1879, Somerville College differed from other Oxford colleges in two ways: Firstly, it did not discriminate against prospective students on religious grounds, and secondly, it admitted only women. This openness set the tone of the college as an inclusive place and one that was ready to challenge traditional educational practices. The exceptional academic achievements of its female alumni challenged the orthodox (传统的) belief that women were less able than men to perform well academically. For this, Somerville received the nickname “bluestocking (才女) college” even though it stopped being a women-only college in 1994.

7 Formal Hall

Formal Hall is a formal college dinner in which students wear gowns and food is served by catering (提供饮食服务的) staff, instead of being self-service. Many formal traditions are observed at Formal Hall. For example: There are High Tables for scholars; a scholar or a senior fellow reads grace (餐前感恩祷告); no one is allowed to leave early without permission; punctuality should be respected; and no drinking games are allowed. In many colleges, a formal dinner is held every night as a way to promote socialization and preserve tradition.

8 The Oxford Union

The Oxford Union is a debating society that holds competitive and chamber debating (议会制辩论). Competitive debating is practised by a limited membership, which competes with other societies and universities worldwide. Chamber debating is known for including guest speakers, who vary from politicians to actors, and for being less formal. The Union is a forum for discussion whose core principle is “freedom of speech”.

9 May Day

May Day is a traditional day of celebration in many Western countries, marking the end of winter. The day is often marked by fairs and markets with traditional dancing, the crowning of a “May Queen”, and much celebration. In Oxford, students celebrate May Morning around the Great Tower, where the Magdalen College Choir has sung the same traditional hymn at 6 am for over 500 years. Students are often still awake from the night before, when a May Ball is held, and can be found wearing evening dresses and dinner jackets in pubs and bars that have opened early to allow the celebrations to continue. May Day is a public holiday and coincides with some other countries’ celebrations of Labour Day, although they are two distinct things.



10 Summer Eights

Summer Eights is a four-day rowing event held in Oxford in May every year. Crews of eight rowers and a cox (舵手) race on a narrow part of the River Thames. Because there is not enough space on the river for all the boats to row side by side, Summer Eights is a “bumps race”. The objective is to bump the boat in front of you and avoid being bumped by another boat from behind. The crews are divided into men’s and women’s divisions and each crew competes to become “Head of the River”. The winning crew is awarded a special oar (桨) in the colours of their college.

11 Subfusc

Subfusc is the formal dress students are required to wear when taking part in examinations, matriculation (入学典礼), and graduation. For men, this is a white shirt, a white bow tie, a mortarboard, and a black gown. For women, this is a white blouse, a black tie, a dark skirt or dark trousers, dark stockings, a mortarboard, and a black gown.



Students wearing subfusc

Listening in ▼

Passage 1

12 Harvard University

Harvard University was established in 1636 and is the oldest institution of higher education in the US. It is located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. There was not a founder per se (本身), because the decision to set up the university was made through voting by the Great and General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The university was named after John Harvard, an Englishman who left his library and half of his estate to the university when he died. The university lists more than 8,000 courses and the main fields of study are Medicine, Business, Education, Design, Law, and Engineering. A number of American presidents studied at Harvard, including John F. Kennedy, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. Internet billionaires Bill Gates (Microsoft) and Mark Zuckerberg (马克·扎克伯格) (Facebook) also studied at Harvard, but both dropped out to develop their businesses. The university's motto is: *Veritas* (the Latin word for "truth").



Memorial Hall at Harvard University

13 Ice hockey

Ice hockey is a very popular sport in the US and is the official winter sport of Canada. It is also popular in the Czech Republic, Finland, Slovakia, and other northern countries. Ice hockey is a fast-paced game with six players on each side. Players wear ice skates and use a stick to control and hit the puck (冰球) into a net. Ice hockey is known as a somewhat violent sport and injuries are very common. The most important league is the NHL, which is played between American and Canadian teams, and the team that has won the league the most often is the Montreal Canadiens (蒙特利尔加拿大人队).

Passage 2

14 Nobel Prize

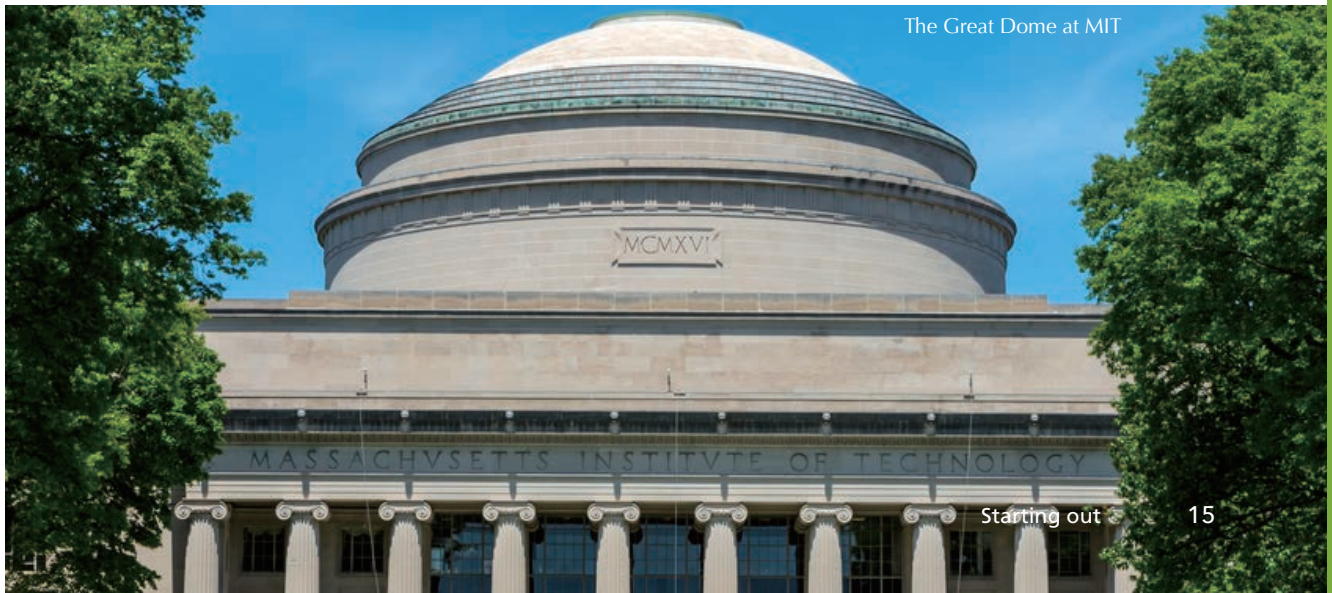
Since 1901, a Nobel Prize has been awarded every year to men and women for their outstanding achievements in Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature, and Peace. The prize scheme was the idea of a Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel – the inventor of dynamite (炸药) – who requested in his will that the foundation be set up. The prizes are very prestigious and each recipient, known as a laureate, is chosen from candidates all over the world.



A Nobel Prize medal

15 Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is one of the best universities in the world in Mathematics, Physics, Engineering, and other hard sciences. It is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the US. It was proposed by William Barton Rogers and founded in 1861. Rogers wanted to develop a polytechnic institute that was engaged in research that would help meet the challenges of the industrial and technological advances of the 19th century. MIT has produced more than 80 Nobel laureates. Notable alumni include Buzz Aldrin (astronaut) and Kofi Annan (former UN Secretary-General). An interesting fact about MIT is that if it was a country, it would have the 11th-largest economy in the world based on the revenues of the companies founded by its alumni.



The Great Dome at MIT

CULTURE FOCUS



The challenges of higher education in Brazil

In the article below, Carlos, a 17-year-old Brazilian student, talks about the exams he will have to take in order to enter university.

I would like to tell you a bit about what it takes to get into university in my country.

Applying to university can be a very stressful experience and the process has been highly criticized. Each university has a different entrance exam, making applications hard work and fairly confusing.

Another problem with this system is that it means the results you worked so hard for in secondary school are no longer relevant. Universities are only interested in the result of your entrance exam: There is no dialogue between secondary schools and universities. For many students in the final year of secondary school, there is just no time to study for school exams and prepare for university exams at the same time, so they enrol in a kind of cram school (补习班). Students often end up thinking that secondary school is a waste of time and that it doesn't prepare them for university. They find themselves studying in a completely disengaging environment where they have to master Chemistry, Biology, and Physics, when all they want is to be a musician, for example. It's easy to see why students end up asking, "What's the point?"

I really don't understand this system. We study Chemistry, Biology, and Physics for eight years at school and that's fine because it's all part of building a strong

knowledge base. But when you're preparing for university, you can't help but ask yourself why you need to keep studying science when you want to be an economist or a lawyer, or why you need to know so much algebra when you want to study History.

And at the end of the day, you hardly remember anything that you've learnt, because you only studied it to pass an exam. Just because you have a great mark in Biology, it doesn't mean that you know not to pollute the environment. And just because you studied so hard at Maths, it doesn't guarantee that you can organize your finances and calculate your tax in real life.

For me, there are three main consequences of this system.

The first consequence is that getting into a public university is very difficult and lots of people then have to consider a private university. Private universities only care about money, so students end up paying high tuition fees for an easy course and a qualification that teaches them nothing.

Another consequence is that if you can't afford a private "cram school", you probably won't pass the university entrance exams and won't get into a public university. It is a bit of a joke that you have to have a "private" education to go to a "public" university. The public universities are the best and they're also free, but the system means that the poorest students probably won't get one of these free places.

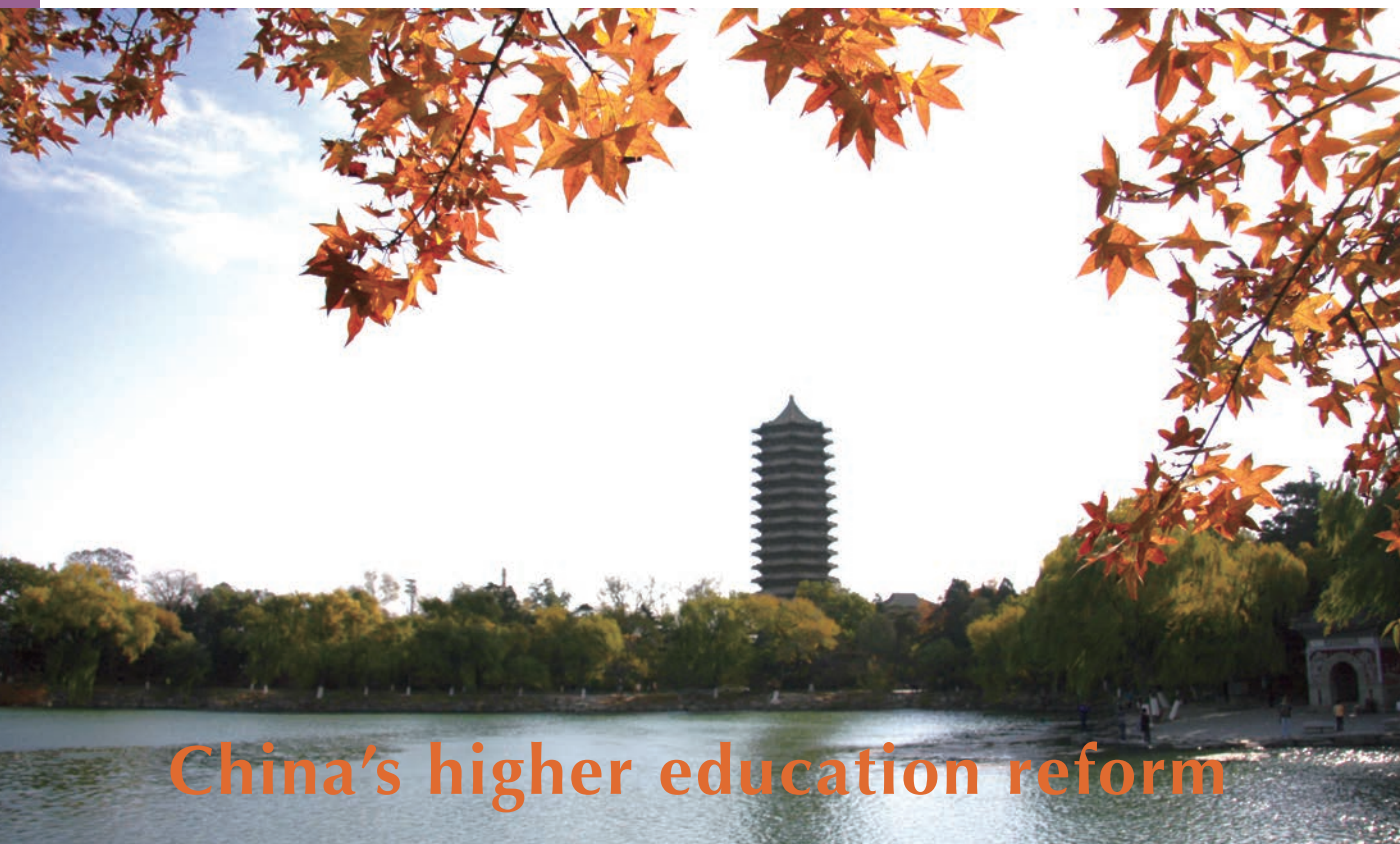
The most important consequence, though, is that school has become really boring! Teachers only teach you how to pass exams, meaning that school does not feel relevant to real life. Because of this, many people do not realize how much fun learning can be.

Education is always a difficult subject to talk about, but in my country, there is a lot we need to do to give people faith in the education system, and to inspire students to learn and teachers to teach.

文中所述与中国的高考有几分相似，如学生的学习压力和考试压力。其实，考试本身并无好坏之分，关键是我们如何正确看待考试并恰当地评判和利用考试结果。现在，各大学的自主招生体制就是一种积极的考试制度改革。越来越多的学校开始关注学生的在校表现而非仅仅是最后的高考成绩。但由于教育资源有限，竞争机制必然会被保留。



- 1 How can you compare the way Carlos feels about his exams to your experience studying for the *gaokao*?
- 2 Carlos mentions he has to study subjects that are not relevant to his chosen profession. How do the high school subjects you studied help you at college now, and how will they help you in the future?
- 3 Do you think the current system of college entrance exams in China is fair for all students?
- 4 What could you reply to Carlos in order to encourage him to study hard for the exams?



China's higher education reform

近几十年来，中国的大学改革进展迅速。中国大学改革的主要目标在于两个方面：其一，从受教育对象的角度来看，国家正在将大学从精英教育转向大众教育；其二，从大学综合实力的角度来看，国家正在加大投入，建立国际化、高水平的大学。

For over 60 years, China has seen its education system grow rapidly. Today, its higher education ranks number one in the world in terms of scale. The aim has been to transform elite higher education into mass higher education, and China has been very successful in this regard. In 2015, for example, over 30 million students were enrolled in higher education. These figures play an important role in China's growth in economic, scientific, and developmental spheres.

Since the 1980s, higher education in China has been reformed in an attempt to give universities more flexibility and autonomy in their administration and academic setup. For example, reforms led universities to be able to choose their curricula, to partner with foreign universities, and to be responsible for administering funds allocated by the government.

Also, at the end of the 20th century, the Chinese government targeted nine universities to become world-class institutions, and has increased funding to these universities year on year. Two of the most important universities in China are Peking University and Tsinghua University.

Peking University was established in Beijing during the Hundred Days of Reform (百日维新) in 1898. Known as a centre of progressive thought, Peking University was instrumental (起重要作用的) in the New Culture Movement (新文化运动) and the May Fourth Movement (五四运动). It receives around 3,000 international students every year from all around the world.

Tsinghua Xuetang, the precursor of Tsinghua University, was established in Beijing in 1911, initially as a preparatory school for Chinese students being sent to study in the US. Today, most university rankings place Tsinghua University among the best universities in the mainland of China. Tsinghua University's famous alumni include many leading figures in China and in international politics.



Although it is improving in many areas, China's higher education still struggles with too much departmentalization (部门化) and segmentation, and also with its focus on examinations. This is an inevitable legacy of the ancient Confucian (儒家的) education tradition where passing exams was the only route to a privileged life for ordinary people who wouldn't otherwise achieve officialdom (官员的地位).

The first examination method used to openly select state officials dates back to the Sui Dynasty (581–618) and included competitive written tests, which were then elaborated in the Tang Dynasty (618–907).

Even though most people are not aware of it, Western examination traditions were originally copied from the Chinese system. France was the first to learn more about Chinese examination forms and to introduce them in their country at the end of the 18th century. In the 19th century, Germany, the UK, and the US did the same. The main benefit of the Chinese system for these countries was that they could select civil servants based on merit, rather than on nepotism (裙带关系) or other corrupt ways.

While examination systems are largely acknowledged to be fair and meritocratic (精英教育的), they are also criticized for their encouragement of rote (死记硬背的) learning. Even after the imperial examinations were terminated in 1905 and the focus shifted from Confucianism towards science in the academic sphere, the emphasis on rote learning to pass exams is still great. An example is the National College Entrance Examination, which places a lot of stress on students. In recent years, China's education system has undergone a lot of changes to ensure that students get fair chances of education. And beyond question, there are still more educational initiatives to come.



- 1 Compare your formal education to that of your parents or older acquaintances. What are the main differences?
- 2 If you could change one aspect in the Chinese education system, what would it be?
- 3 What is your view on exams? Do you think they measure knowledge accurately?

CULTURE LINKS



***The Social Network* (2010)**

This intelligent drama tells the true story of Facebook's creation by Mark Zuckerberg, a student at Harvard University. It's a thrilling experience, driven by ambitious students' fast-paced dialogue and a twist-filled plot. The grand, aged buildings of Harvard's campus seem a world away from the software development taking place inside.



***Chariots of Fire* (1981)**

In this iconic British film a group of young amateur athletes overcome their differences to compete on the British team for the 1924 Summer Olympics. Much of the film is set in the beautiful grounds of Cambridge University and shows elements of student life in the 1920s. It also features an award-winning soundtrack by Vangelis.



<http://www.ox.ac.uk>

On the University of Oxford website, international students can find out lots of information about what it is like to study there. The website also contains many interesting facts about the history and traditions of the university.

<http://www.visitoxfordandoxfordshire.com>

The official tourism website for Oxford and Oxfordshire (牛津郡) gives you a comprehensive picture of this beautiful part of England. You can also read about festivals and events in the region.