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End elective anxiety



Talking to your careers counsellor or teacher can help if you're not sure what to do. Photo: Sam Tsang

If you're struggling to decide whether to drop an elective or not, **Ben Pang** gives you some advice from an expert

The novelty of the new term has worn off, and now you're wondering whether or not you should drop an elective. It's not a decision to be taken lightly, as it could affect your chances of getting into university. *Young Post* asked Ng Tak-kay, one of the presidents of Hok Yau Club and principal of CUHKFAA Thomas Cheung Secondary School, for some advice to help you decide what's best for you.

There are four compulsory subjects for those taking the DSE - English, Chinese, maths, and liberal studies. On top of that, students can choose up to four electives from subjects including physical education, humanities, and science.

Maths is a core subject, but students can also choose extended maths: calculus and statistics (M1), or algebra and calculus (M2).

Ng says most students choose two electives. Whether to give up an elective depends on your abilities and what you want to do in the future.

"There are many reasons for deciding to give up an elective. It could be that the

elective you chose is very different from what you expected. Maybe you realise the elective doesn't fit your career path," says Ng. "It can also be hard to cope with two or more electives. Or, you might think you're not doing well enough in the core subjects, especially English and Chinese. In this case, giving up an elective seems like a reasonable and rational choice.

"Dropping an elective can give you more time, so you should feel less stressed. You can devote much more time and effort to your remaining subjects."

But Ng says you need to be sure, because dropping an elective is a big decision.

"It can be risky. Giving up an elective won't necessarily help you do better in your remaining subjects. And nothing is certain. If you fail your only remaining elective, that could ruin your chances of getting into university," he says.

It can also be hard to cope with two or more electives

"Most importantly, look at the university admissions requirements. If you plan to study at a specific university, check how many electives you need to have.

"[Just like with the core subjects] the minimum scores needed for electives vary, too. For every local university, you need at least level 3 in Chinese and English, and level 2 in maths and liberal studies [3322]. But for some places, you also need a level 3 in electives."

Programmes will make it clear if you need to study a specific elective or get a certain score. For example, you need M1 or M2 at level 4 at least to study actuarial science at the University of Hong Kong.

"Be careful when deciding which elective to drop. Read the university admissions requirements carefully, talk to your teachers or career counsellors and make a strategic plan for your future. Avoid missing the chance to study the programme you want," Ng says.

And don't forget the deadline for applying to the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (Jupas) is December 1 (11.59pm).

Visit yp.scmp.com for more tips on the Jupas application process and how you can get a 5 in your DSEs**

What grades do you need?

These are the basic entry requirements for different universities. But remember, many courses have higher requirements, so check the specific conditions for the course you want to study.

- City University:** four core and any two electives (3322+33)
- Baptist University:** four core and any one elective (3322+2)
- Lingnan University:** four core and any one elective (3322+2)
- Chinese University:** four core and any two electives (3322+33). Bonus points will be given to the third elective.
- The Education University of Hong Kong:** four core and any one elective (3322+2)
- Polytechnic University:** four core and any two electives (3322+33)
- University of Science and Technology:** four core and any two electives (3322+33)
- University of Hong Kong:** four core and any two electives (3322+33)
- Open University of Hong Kong:** four core and any one elective (3322+2)