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Make it on the mainland

Studying abroad doesn't have to mean the US or Britain. **Ben Pang** spoke to the Ho Yau Club's Student Guidance Centre director for some tips on studying on the mainland

The mainland has become an increasingly popular destination for higher education. More than 3,500 local students applied to mainland universities last year, accounting for about six per cent of some 62,200 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education exam candidates. *Young Post* asked Ho Yau Club Student Guidance Centre director Ng Po-shing for some tips on how to apply.

There are quite a few routes into mainland universities. Ng says the most popular one is the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions. This scheme means applicants don't need to take the National College Entrance Examination. But you must hold a Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card or a Hong Kong Identity Card, and also a valid *wui hueng jing*. For the 2017 intake, you must take this school year's DSE exam. This means that the scheme excludes applicants who took the HKCEE or A-Levels, or HKDSE, between 2012 and 2016.

Online applications usually open in early

March. You should apply via the Education Examinations Authority of Guangdong Province (www.eeagd.edu.cn/portal) by clicking on "Hong Kong Students Application" under the "Joint Admission" menu. Some 84 institutions were involved in this scheme in 2016, including Peking, Tsinghua and Fudan universities. You have to narrow down to four institutions, and for each institution, you can select four programmes.

Uploading your Other Learning Experiences, Student Learning Profile and School Principal's Nominations is optional, but can help your application. Refer back to the website to check whether or not you have been made an offer.

After applying online, you must visit China Education Exchange (Hong Kong) Centre Limited for an identity check. The Education Bureau regularly updates their website (www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/postsecondary/policy-doc/pilot-scheme) with information on application procedures and the deadlines of the different stages.

Ng says there is a huge difference between the Joint University Programmes

Admissions System (Jupas) and the mainland admission scheme. Through Jupas, getting a place depends on your DSE results, and students with the highest scores are the first offered a place. However, the mainland admission scheme is based on the priority of your university choices, although they will still look at your DSE results. For example, if you put Peking University as your first choice, as long as you meet the minimum entry requirements, they are likely to offer you a place. Putting a university as your first choice means you are given priority - even above those who have higher DSE scores. You are initially accepted to the university, and they will then assign you to a programme based on your preferred choices.

The mainland admission scheme is based on the priority of your university choices

Ng says you can put your favourite university as your first choice, but use your other choices carefully. "The university that people put for their first choice can be very competitive and hard to get into. For example, you might need to score level five or above in six DSE subjects." If your expected

grades are only level three or above in four subjects, you should select less competitive programmes as your second choice. Your third and last choices serve as a backup that will secure you an offer. Visit the Education Bureau website for the entrance requirements of different mainland universities.

If you're serious about studying on the mainland, there are a few things you need to consider before applying. The first is your ability to master the medium of instruction at mainland universities. "Bear in mind most programmes are taught in Putonghua. Simplified Chinese characters are also used in most learning materials. It takes time to adapt to the medium of instruction, especially if you come from an English-medium secondary school."

Adjusting to life on the mainland could be a problem, too, Ng says.

"You have to think about whether you can 'survive' without some social media platforms like Facebook. But treat it as a valuable learning experience as you'll be exposed to people from different cultures and learning backgrounds."

For other routes into mainland universities, and how your qualifications will be viewed in Hong Kong, visit yp.scmp.com