

# Athletes given sporting chance

Lisa Kao

**H**ONG KONG ATHLETES have long been facing much difficulty trying to balance their studies on top of training and competitions.

"Our athletes are doing well in both sports and their studies, but they always need to compromise," said Herman Hu, the chairman of Hong Kong Athletes Career and Education Programme. "Generally, schools in Hong Kong are too rigid, lessons cannot be adjusted according to their training and competitions."

As a result, the program joined hands with Ontario eSchool to launch a scholarship program for Hong Kong athletes, allowing them to take grade 12 courses at Ontario eSchool that provides high flexibility in terms of scheduling and location. "As everything is conducted online, it is very convenient for athletes," said Hu.

Ontario eSchool Athlete Scholarship Program is opening its application to serving and retired athletes, offering those who complete form five or equivalent to study grade 12 high school courses offered at Ontario eSchool.

Applicants should have outstanding sports results in local or international competitions—that is, won at least one medal from the Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation interschool competition or local youth open competitions organized by the national sports associations in the past three years. They must also be nominated by a national sports association and have a basic command of English proficiency that allows them to communicate and study in English. The quota is for up to eight athletes.

The online school is authorized to issue high school credits and a high school diploma. Students can transfer their form three to five school results in Hong Kong into high school credits. Adding on the credits obtained in grade 12, with a total credit of 30, they are qualified to obtain an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

With the diploma, students are able to directly apply for universities that are not just in Canada but also in Britain, the United States, Australia.

"Universities will be looking at the best six subjects in grade six as the reference of intake," said Alan Chan, director of Ontario eSchool.

The results can also be used to apply to universities in Hong Kong through the non-JUPAS path.

But students can only apply for either JUPAS or non-JUPAS to apply for universities in Hong Kong.

"So I recommend one uses the diploma to apply for overseas universities, while using DSE results

for Hong Kong universities," said Chan.

An online school means that the school has a flexible class schedule and has no restrictions on locations.

However, that does not equal with having a lower teaching standard than traditional schools.

Hurdler Shing Cho-yan said the program sets stricter standards than those at a traditional school.

The record holder of Hong Kong girls' 100-meter hurdles participated in the pilot scheme of the scholarship program last year, while taking grade 12 English courses at the Canadian online school for a year.

The 18-year-old student of Tin Shui Wai Methodist College encountered situations where she had to miss classes because of competitions.

"Sometimes I had to skip lessons for a whole week in order to go to competitions," she said. "When I came back, it was hard to catch up with my classmates."

She managed to maintain good results in a traditional school—but said her results could be better if her schedule could fit her need of flexibility.

For her studies last year, Shing could take courses on her own terms.

"I am taking the lessons from 11 to 12 at night, and when I am busy I would have a lesson a week, otherwise it would be two lessons a week," she said.

All lessons in the school are conducted in small sizes, with a maximum number of one teacher for four students at a time, while for Shing's class, it was one on one.

"My teacher is Canadian and she is very nice. She is always happy to answer any questions."

After taking the course for a year, the secondary school graduate said her English has greatly improved especially in writing and speaking.

"My vocabulary has increased, and talking to the teacher has made me more confident speaking in English."

Though she has less homework than traditional schools, the teacher is very strict. "But there are no exams," said Shing.

Interested athletes have to prepare their form three to five transcript, with an essay of up to 200 words explaining why they want the scholarship, as well as obtain nominations from national sports



associations by July 2. Each association can nominate a maximum of two members for the program.

Awardees will be selected according to their sports achievements, commitment to the scholar-

ship and suitability to participate in the program. Nominees may be required to attend an interview by the organizer. Results will be announced by August. [lisa.kao@singtaonewscorp.com](mailto:lisa.kao@singtaonewscorp.com)



Shing Cho-yan