

Growing awareness

The master of social sciences in counselling psychology, offered by Shue Yan University's department of counselling and psychology, is the first course of its kind in Hong Kong.

Seay Thomas, the programme director, says there's a big local demand for counselling psychologists as people become more aware of mental health issues.

"The profession is a new field in Hong Kong. Unlike clinical psychologists, who work according to a sickness-based model and work with patients suffering from nervous breakdowns, counselling psychologists work according to a wellness-based



Photo: Felix Wong

model, which puts more focus on improving the general wellbeing of a person who is healthy but going through a difficult phase of life," he says.

The programme is designed to create a distinct professional identity for counselling psychologists, and to contribute towards meeting the community's psychological needs.

The course consists of internships within and outside the university which account for more than 1,000 hours of practical experience. Internship training is provided at the university's Counselling and Research Centre, and students have to complete three outside postings in places such as schools or mental health care centres to graduate.

Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree with honours in psychology. Those with a degree in other disciplines are required to take a short psychology programme.

Student Backy Tong Ho-yea says the course put a lot of focus on counselling skills. "There are very few counselling psychologists in Hong Kong and I believe the job prospects will be quite bright," she says. "It also increases my cultural sensitivity, which I think is an important trait for a counsellor working in a multicultural society like Hong Kong."