

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Course Outline

Part I

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| Programme Title | : Master of Public Policy and Management |
| Programme QF Level | : 6 |
| Course Title | : Research Methods for Policy Analysis and Evaluation |
| Course Code | : PPG6001 |
| Department/Unit | : Department of Social Sciences and Policy Studies |
| Credit Points | : 3 |
| Contact Hours | : 39 |
| Pre-requisite(s) | : Nil |
| Medium of Instruction | : EMI |
| Course Level | : 6 |

Part II

The University's Graduate Attributes and seven Generic Intended Learning Outcomes (GILOs) represent the attributes of ideal EdUHK graduates and their expected qualities respectively. Learning outcomes work coherently at the University (GILOs), programme (Programme Intended Learning Outcomes) and course (Course Intended Learning Outcomes) levels to achieve the goal of nurturing students with important graduate attributes.

In gist, the Graduate Attributes for Sub-degree, Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate, Professional Doctorate and Research Postgraduate students consist of the following three domains (i.e. in short "PEER & I"):

- Professional Excellence;
- Ethical Responsibility; &
- Innovation.

The descriptors under these three domains are different for the three groups of students in order to reflect the respective level of Graduate Attributes.

The seven GILOs are:

1. Problem Solving Skills
2. Critical Thinking Skills
3. Creative Thinking Skills
- 4a. Oral Communication Skills
- 4b. Written Communication Skills
5. Social Interaction Skills
6. Ethical Decision Making
7. Global Perspectives

1. Course Synopsis

This course will review the literature, tools, and strategies that inform quantitative and qualitative methods of research in public policy. The focus of the course will be on generating and using evidence in public policy.

Lectures will cover the following topics:

1. Understanding policy research
 - Four levels of policy research
 - Basic component of a study: research question, research hypothesis, independent variable, dependent variable, population, sample, and sampling method
 - Characteristics of a good sample: Representativeness, sufficient sample size, and acceptable response rate
2. Population, sample, and sampling error
 - Population, sample, parameter, and statistics
 - Sampling error and its measurement
 - Relationship between sample size and sampling error
 - Relationship of sampling error with population size, estimated parameter and confidence level
 - Justification of sample size in proposal
3. Sampling method
 - Random sampling vs non-random sampling
 - Simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, multi-stage cluster random sampling, stratified random sampling
 - Convenience sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling
4. Questionnaire design and method data collection
 - Design a good questionnaire
 - Face-to-face interview, phone interview, and self-administration questionnaire or mail survey
5. Quantitative data analysis with SPSS
 - Introduction to SPSS
 - Descriptive statistics: Frequency distribution, mean, mode, median, range, standard deviation, and standard error
 - Level of measurement:
 - Bivariate data analysis: Chi-square test, t-test, and correlation
 - Multivariate data analysis: Regression
6. Qualitative method
 - In-depth interview, focus group and observation
 - Sampling
 - Design (single case or multiple cases)
 - Qualitative data analysis: Coding, interpreting, analysing, triangulation, verification, rigour, theory building and use of NVIVO

7. Policy evaluation design
 - Introduction to policy evaluation design
 - Single group post-test design
 - Single group pre- and post-test design
 - Internal validity of the design
 - Experimental and control group pre- and post-test design
 - Randomized clinical trial
8. Data analysis in policy evaluation
 - Data analysis for single group post-test design
 - Data analysis for single group pre- and post-test design
 - Data analysis for randomized clinical trial: Attrition analysis, evaluation of randomized group assignment, main analysis
9. Proposal and report writing
 - Introduction: Literature review, strategies for justifying the study, objectives and hypotheses
 - Method: Design, sampling and sample size, data collection, questionnaire, and statistical analysis
 - Ethical approval and budget in proposal
 - Result and discussion in report

This course will last for the whole academic year. The course will start with 13 lectures in the first semester, in which there will be an in-class quiz to assess students' knowledge of lecture contents and a training exercise to improve students' skills in research design. Meanwhile, the students with similar research interests will form into groups of one to five by the end of the first semester. Under the guidance of a faculty member, each group will identify a policy issue of practical significance, review the extant knowledge base relevant to the policy issue and recommend specific policy solutions/actions to address the issue in the second semester. Students will have a group presentation on the proposal and their findings of the chosen policy issue towards the end of the second semester and submit their group reports thereafter.

The research group project is intended to provide students the opportunity to integrate analytical skills and specialized knowledge gained in the MPPM programme and to apply them to analysing and addressing real-world policy problems. Conducting the project will consist of describing the scope and magnitude of the chosen problem, analysing its causes, proposing solutions, and assessing the implications of the proposed solutions. The topics students choose are expected to be in an area with which students have some practical or academic familiarity.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- CILO₁* : Formulate appropriate research questions and set research hypotheses.
- CILO₂* : Develop an appropriate research design.
- CILO₃* : Justify the sample size and determine the sampling method.

- CILO₄* : Collect data by using structured interviewing, questionnaire and observation techniques.
- CILO₅* : Analyse quantitative data using SPSS.
- CILO₆* : Conduct and analyse qualitative study.
- CILO₇* : Prepare a research proposal and report.
- CILO₈* : Appreciate and critically evaluate social research methods.
- CILO₉* : Conduct a group policy study independently.

3. Content, CILOs and Teaching & Learning Activities

| Course Content | CILOs | Suggested Teaching & Learning Activities |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| Formulate appropriate research questions and set research hypotheses | <i>CILO₁</i> | ➤ Lectures, group discussion, and group exercise |
| Develop an appropriate research design | <i>CILO₂</i> | ➤ Lectures, group discussion, and group exercise |
| Justify the sample size and determine the sampling method | <i>CILO₃</i> | ➤ Lectures, group discussion, and group exercise |
| Collect data by using structured interviewing, questionnaire and observation techniques | <i>CILO₄</i> | ➤ Lectures, group discussion, and group exercise |
| Conduct and analyse qualitative study | <i>CILO₅</i> | ➤ Lectures, group discussion, and group exercise |
| Analyse quantitative data using SPSS | <i>CILO₆</i> | ➤ Lectures, group discussion, and group exercise |
| Prepare a research proposal and report | <i>CILO₇</i> | ➤ Lectures, group discussion, and supervision |
| Appreciate and critically evaluate social research methods | <i>CILO₈</i> | ➤ Lectures, group discussion, and group exercise |
| Conduct a group policy study independently | <i>CILO₉</i> | ➤ Lectures, group discussion, and supervision |

4. Assessment

| Assessment Tasks | Weighting (%) | CILO |
|--|---------------|---------------------------|
| (a) Group Work ➤ Group presentation and report Students are required to prepare a project proposal of around 2,000 words as a group towards the end of the first semester and present the project findings in front of a panel consisting of at least two faculty members towards the end of the second semester. The group presentation needs to identify social/policy problems concerned, specify research questions, conduct a summary of the literature, illustrate the | 50% | <i>CILO₁₋₉</i> |

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|---|-----|---------------------------|
| <p>data and methodological issues involved, and put forward policy suggestions/recommendations to address the problem.</p> <p>After the group presentation, each group has to submit a group report of around 5,000 words to elaborate on the presented proposal and findings.</p> <p>Students can form a group of 4-5 to work on the same research topic. Alternatively, students can choose to complete a presentation and project report individually.</p> | | |
| <p>(b) Individual written test and exercise</p> <p>All students are required to attend the in-class test scheduled in the middle of the first semester and the training exercise on research design at the end of the first semester. Students should submit an individual report of around 1,500 words in relation to the exercise.</p> | 40% | <i>CILO₁₋₉</i> |
| <p>(c) Class participation and discussion</p> <p>Attendance (5%) and class participation (5%) will be assessed based on students' engagement. Details will be given in the course syllabus.</p> | 10% | <i>CILO₁₋₉</i> |

5. Use of Generative AI in Course Assessments

Please select one option only that applies to this course:

☐ **Not Permitted:** In this course, the use of generative AI tools is not allowed for any assessment tasks.

☒ **Permitted:** In this course, generative AI tools may be used in some or all assessment tasks. Instructors will provide specific instructions, including any restrictions or additional requirements (e.g., proper acknowledgment, reflective reports), during the first lesson and in relevant assessment briefs.

6. Required Text(s)

Babbie, E.R. (2016). *The Practice of Social Research* (14th ed.). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Cengage.

7. Recommended Readings

B. Guy Peters, Guillaume Fontain (Eds) (2020). *Handbook of research methods and applications in comparative policy analysis*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
 Available at:
<https://ezproxy.eduhk.hk/login?url=http://www.lib.eduhk.hk/cgi-bin/ebookcentral?6190748>.

- Bardach, E. (2011). *A practical guide for policy analysis: The eightfold path to more effective problem solving* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Bell, J. (2005). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science* (4th ed.). Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.
- Blanksby, P. E., & Barber, J. G. (2006). *SPSS for social workers: An introductory workbook*. Boston: Pearson.
- Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., & Tight, M. (2001). *How to research*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2003). *The craft of research* (2nd ed.). Chicago, Il: US: University of Chicago Press.
- Crewell, J.W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. (5th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Della Porta, D., & Keating, M. (2008). *Approaches and methodologies in the social sciences: A pluralist perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dunn, W. N. (2008). *Public policy analysis: An introduction* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Gerald, S. K. (2009). *Evidence and explanation in social science: An interdisciplinary approach*. London: Routledge.
- Harvey, F. P., & Brecher, M. (Eds.). (2002). *Evaluating methodology in International studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Feeney, B. C. (2013). *A simple guide to IBM SPSS statistics for versions 20.0*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth.
- Marsh, D., & Stoker, G. (Eds.). (1995). *Theory and methods in political science*. Basingstoke, England: Macmillan.
- Pallant, J. (2010). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS*. Maidenhead: Open University Press/McGraw-Hill.

Seidman, I. (2019). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (5th ed.). Teachers College Press.

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

8. Related Web Resources

- World Bank data base: <http://databank.worldbank.org>
- National Bureau of Statistics, PRC: <https://www.stats.gov.cn/english/>
- Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR
<http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/home/index.jsp>

9. Related Journals

Use as necessary

10. Academic Honesty

The University upholds the principles of honesty in all areas of academic work. We expect our students to carry out all academic activities honestly and in good faith. Please refer to the *Policy on Academic Honesty, Responsibility and Integrity* (<https://www.eduhk.hk/re/uploads/docs/000000000016336798924548BbN5>).

Students should familiarize themselves with the Policy.

11. Others

Nil

Updated as of 16 July 2025