

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Course Outline

Part I

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
 - 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 and theory building
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

The course will include 13 lectures , 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, students with similar research interests will form groups and 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 form of poster presentation and a report write-up.

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
To understand how to formulate appropriate research questions and set research hypotheses	<i>CILO₁</i>	➤ Lectures, group discussion, and group exercise
To understand how to develop an appropriate research design	<i>CILO₂</i>	➤ Lectures, group discussion, and group exercise
To understand how to justify the sample size and determine the sampling method	<i>CILO₃</i>	➤ Lectures, group discussion
To understand how to collect data by using structured interviewing, questionnaire and observation techniques	<i>CILO₄</i>	➤ Lectures, group discussion
To understand how to conduct and analyse qualitative study	<i>CILO₅</i>	➤ Lectures, group discussion
To understand how to analyse quantitative data using SPSS	<i>CILO₆</i>	➤ Lectures, group discussion, and group exercise
To understand how to prepare a research proposal and report	<i>CILO₇</i>	➤ Lectures, group discussion
To understand how to appreciate and critically evaluate social research methods	<i>CILO₈</i>	➤ Lectures, group discussion
To understand how to conduct a group policy study independently	<i>CILO₉</i>	➤ Lectures, group discussion

4. Assessment

Assessment Tasks	Weighting (%)	CILO
(a) Group Work ➤ Group poster presentation and report Students are required to design a poster according to the template provided, present the poster (500 - 800 words) and submit a group report (1,500 words) after the presentation.	40%	<i>CILO₁₋₉</i>
(b) Individual midterm written test All students are required to attend the in-class written midterm test.	50%	<i>CILO₁₋₉</i>
(c) Class participation and discussion	10%	<i>CILO₁₋₉</i>

Attendance (5%) and class participation (5%) will be assessed based on students' engagement. Details will be given in the course syllabus.		
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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. (2017). *The practice of social research* (Fourteenth edition.). Cengage Learning.

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.eduhk.hk/lib/hkied-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4458812>

7. Recommended Readings

Bardach, E., & Patashnik, E. M. (2025). *A practical guide for policy analysis : the eightfold path to more effective problem solving* (Seventh edition.). CQ Press.

Berman, E. M., & Wang, X. (2018). *Essential statistics for public managers and policy analysts* (Fourth edition.). CQ Press, an imprint of SAGE Publications, Inc.

Bryant, A. (2017). *Grounded theory and grounded theorizing : pragmatism in research practice*. Oxford University Press.

Clark, T., & Bryman, A. (2021). *Bryman's social research methods* (Sixth edition.). Oxford University Press.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (Sixth edition.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2025). *Qualitative inquiry & research design : choosing among five approaches* (Fifth edition.). Sage.

Dunn, W. N. (2019). *Public policy analysis : an integrated approach* (Sixth

edition.). Routledge.

Hennink, M. M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative research methods* (2E.). Sage.

Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Feeney, B. C. (2016). *A simple guide to IBM SPSS® statistics for version 23.0*. Cengage Learning.

Pallant, J. (2016). *SPSS survival manual : a step by step guide to data analysis using IBM SPSS* (6th edition.). Allen & Unwin.

Peters, B. G., & Fontaine, G. (2020). *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Comparative Policy Analysis*. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Available at: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.eduhk.hk/lib/hkied-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6190748>.

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

Tashakkori, A., Johnson, R. B., & Teddlie, C. (2021). *Foundations of mixed methods research : integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences* (Second edition.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

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 7 July 2026