

# PIA6015: MASTER'S THESIS

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**Effective Term**

Semester A 2025/26

## Part I Course Overview

**Course Title**

Master's Thesis

**Subject Code**

PIA - Public and International Affairs

**Course Number**

6015

**Academic Unit**

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

**College/School**

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

**Course Duration**

Two Semesters

**Credit Units**

0-3

**Level**

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

**Medium of Instruction**

English

**Medium of Assessment**

English

**Prerequisites**

PIA5026 Research Design for the Social Sciences

**Precursors**

Nil

**Equivalent Courses**

AIS6015 Master's Thesis

**Exclusive Courses**

PIA6018/PIA6018A MAIS Capstone Project, PIA6019/PIA6019A MSSDS Capstone Project, PIA6019 DS Capstone Project, PIA6021 Master's Thesis

**Additional Information**

\* This is a dissertation-type course as defined in City University's Academic Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Degrees (AR12.6). The maximum duration of the course is 3 regular semesters plus a summer term, after which no further extension can be permitted. As set out in City University's Academic Regulations, dissertation-type courses cannot be repeated.

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

This course aims to guide students in the planning, implementation and write-up of a substantial independent research project, exploring one of the themes from their studies of International or Development issues (chosen by the student in consultation with the supervisor). Before undertaking this course - in lieu of the required "Capstone Project" (PIA6018 or PIA6019) -students must have first completed PIA5026 Research Design for the Social Sciences, with a minimum grade of A. The Master's thesis is an opportunity for students to draw on new knowledge gained from postgraduate coursework, previous knowledge derived from undergraduate studies and design a project that entails original discovery and innovation.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if DEC-A1 DEC-A2 DEC-A3 app.)			
1	Formulate an ethically-grounded research plan		x	x	x
2	Summarize theories, results and conclusions from previous studies		x	x	x
3	Present analysis and original data or findings effectively		x	x	x

#### A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

#### A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

#### A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

### Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	1	Students will engage in regular, individual consultations with the supervisor; plan their independent research and data collection and elaborate findings, with feedback from the supervisor	1, 2, 3	
2	2	Students will engage with appropriate reading and develop an ethically-grounded research	2	
3	3	Students will apply skills and methods to write a full thesis	1, 2, 3	

**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

	<b>ATs</b>	<b>CILO No.</b>	<b>Weighting (%)</b>	<b>Remarks ("- " for nil entry)</b>	<b>Allow Use of GenAI?</b>
1	Thesis (10,000-12,000 words)	1, 2, 3	100	Submission at the end of the Summer Term	No

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)****Assessment Task**

Thesis (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 &amp; thereafter)

**Criterion**

Demonstrated capacity to undertake and present the results of a piece of original research; quality of research design, review of the relevant literature, theoretical development, collection/analysis of evidence (or data), presentation of findings, contribution to the body of knowledge in the chosen area of study.

**Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent-- an excellent thesis; evidence that the author is capable of postgraduate studies in sociology or a related discipline at MPhil or possibly PhD level; very good mastery of the methods and concepts used, and very good documentation. A- is on the edge of this category, but still very good.

**Good**

(B+, B, B-) Good-- a solid thesis with reasonably good research, analysis, and documentation.

**Fair**

(C+, C, C-) Fair/satisfactory-- documentation, analysis, writing, use of concepts, referencing, and research effort are mostly adequate for a passing grade, but with enough flaws and shortcomings that it cannot be judged to be 'good' or 'very good'.

**Marginal**

(D) Limited-- barely a pass. Many serious flaws and shortcomings in the research and presentation of results.

**Failure**

(F) Below the marginal level-- does not demonstrate the minimum research effort and documentation; or: substantial plagiarism.

**Assessment Task**

Thesis (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

**Criterion**

Demonstrated capacity to undertake and present the results of a piece of original, ethically-grounded research; quality of research design, review of the relevant literature, theoretical development, collection/analysis of evidence (or data), presentation of findings, contribution to the body of knowledge in the chosen area of study.

**Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent, well-designed thesis with evidence that the author is capable of postgraduate studies in social sciences at MPhil or possibly PhD level; very good mastery of the methods and concepts used; original collection and analysis of sources and documentation; good writing quality. A- is on the edge of this category, but still very good.

**Good**

(B+, B) Good thesis, with appropriate mobilization of methods and concepts; adequate collection and analysis of sources and documentation; but limited originality and contribution to the body of knowledge; fair writing quality.

### **Marginal**

(B-, C+, C) Flawed thesis, with limited or inadequate mobilization of methods, theory and concepts; limited data collection and low level of analysis of sources and documentation; shortcomings and lack of originality, with no contribution to the existing body of knowledge; poor writing quality with evidence of plagiarism.

### **Failure**

(F) Failure to submit; substantial evidence of cheating or plagiarism; does not demonstrate the minimum research effort and documentation

## **Part III Other Information**

### **Keyword Syllabus**

Social Research; Thesis; Ethics of Research; Literature Review; Theory Building; Data Collection; Data Analysis; Findings; Dissemination of Research; Academic Integrity.

After initial discussion of the student's preferred topic with the supervisor (typically based on the final proposal prepared for PIA5026) students will be required to prepare a substantial proposal as a basis for further discussion. The self-directed course will then focus on the ethical review application, the relevant analytical frameworks, and (once the ethical committee approves the research project) on gathering of relevant data or comparable case studies, analysis of the variables or context, implications, and eventually effective presentation and writing. Students and supervisors will meet frequently to discuss progress, issues, and problems.

### **Reading List**

#### **Compulsory Readings**

<b>Title</b>	
1	Readings depend on the topic and will be decided in consultation with the supervisor. Students will prepare for the project by compiling a detailed literature review that includes a list of articles, books, and perhaps films, and web-based items, to provide the material needed for the thesis. Work on this list will be discussed regularly with the supervisor.

#### **Additional Readings**

<b>Title</b>	
1	Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, 2003. <i>The Craft of Research</i> (2nd ed.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
2	Bryman, Alan, 2012. <i>Social Research Methods</i> (4th ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3	Ragin, Charles C. and Lisa M. Amoroso, 2011. <i>Constructing Social Research</i> (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.