

PIA6021: MASTER'S THESIS

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Master's Thesis

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

6021

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

Two Semesters

Credit Units

0-4

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

Nil

Exclusive Courses

PIA6015 Master's Thesis, PIA6018/PIA6018A MAIS Capstone; Project, PIA6019/PIA6019A MSSDS/DS Capstone Project, PIA6020 SSP Capstone Project

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/PIA6018A or PIA6019/PIA6019A) - 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 MA 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 app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
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	Supervision Session	Regular, individual consultations with the supervisor; independent planning, analysis, research, and elaboration of findings by the student, with feedback from the supervisor	1, 2, 3
2	Individual Research	Reading and ethically-grounded research	2
3	Individual Research	Thesis writing	1, 2, 3

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("-" for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Thesis (10,000-12,000 words)	1, 2, 3	100	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

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

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, B-) Good thesis, with appropriate mobilization of methods and concepts; adequate collection and analysis of sources and documentation; but with enough flaws and shortcomings that it cannot be judged to be 'good' or 'very good'.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Fair/satisfactory-documentation, analysis, writing, use of concepts, referencing, and research effort are mostly adequate for a passing grade, but limited originality and contribution to the body of knowledge; fair writing quality.

Marginal

(D) 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

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), the student 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**

Title	
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

Title	
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.