

LW6137E: DISSERTATION

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Dissertation

Subject Code

LW - Law

Course Number

6137E

Academic Unit

School of Law (FL)

College/School

School of Law (FL)

Course Duration

Non-standard Duration

Other Course Duration

One semester or two semesters as follows (i) in Semester A and in Semester B of the same academic year; or (ii) in Semester B and in the following Summer Term; or (iii) in Semester B and in Semester A of the immediate following academic year; or (iv) in one semester (Semester A or Semester B)

Credit Units

0-6

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Dissertation Coordinator's approval of a research proposal submitted by the student

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

LW6537E, LW6551E, LW5551 & LW5552 (Students who have completed or are taking LW6551E /LW5551/LW5552 are not allowed to take LW6137E)

Additional Information

Remarks: Students enrolled in LW6137C/E are required to attend a seminar on legal research recommended by the course leader.

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course aims to develop students' ability to carry out independent research and to develop expertise in a given subject area through critical application of theory and techniques provided by the course. Students will be required to undertake individually supervised research and produce a dissertation.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Identify and critically evaluate a legal area for research based on current relevance and impact.		x	x	
2	Conduct in-depth independent research on the chosen subject area.		x	x	
3	Evaluate and synthesize relevant literature and resources to support the dissertation.		x	x	
4	Critically apply selected theory and techniques developed during the programme to the chosen area.		x	x	x
5	Communicate effectively in writing a programme of work and, if required, orally defend the dissertation in a logical, precise and coherent manner.		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		Focused Independent Research: Students will conduct independent research on a topic that aligns with their academic interests and programme objectives. The course will provide a list of suggested topics to guide student selection, ensuring relevance and feasibility.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	15 hours of individual consultation per student in total
2		Each student will be matched with a supervisor whose expertise aligns with the chosen research topic. This process will be structured to ensure an optimal fit based on academic interests and available faculty expertise. Supervisors will facilitate access to a network of practitioners and academics for interdisciplinary insight and feedback, enhancing the depth and breadth of the research.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	

3		Clear guidelines will be issued for dissertation progress, including mandatory bi-weekly meetings with the supervisor to discuss milestones, challenges, and next steps. The supervisor and the student will establish a regular schedule of progress reports and consultations. The schedule will depend on the nature of the dissertation. Supervisors will actively guide students to keep their research focused and on schedule, while also fostering student independence through self-managed goals and reflection on progress.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
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Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	The dissertation must be submitted by the end of the 13th week of Semester B or Semester A, or the 6th week of Summer Term whichever is appropriate. The dissertation must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the standards in the "Regulations for the Form of Theses" as contained in the City University of Hong Kong Calendar. The length of the main text of the dissertation shall be in the range of 16,000 to 20,000 words (excluding footnotes). The main text should be supplemented by footnotes as per the Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities (OSCOLA). The dissertation will be assessed on the basis of the finished written work. The dissertation will be marked by two assessors, each marking to maximum of 50%, giving a total of 100% for the dissertation. One assessor is the dissertation supervisor. The second assessor, will normally be	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	100	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Additional Information for ATs

On the recommendation of the assessors, the Dissertation Coordinator may require the student to present and defend the dissertation. This will not contribute to the final mark. The purpose of the oral presentation is to test the student's comprehension of the content and context of the dissertation, and to confirm that the work presented is that of the student. The oral presentation will be made before a panel appointed by the Dissertation Coordinator and normally comprise the Dissertation Coordinator or the Chairman of the Examination Board as Chairman, the dissertation supervisor and the second assessor.

Applicable to students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter

Students must obtain an overall mark of 40% in order to pass the course.

Applicable to students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024

Students must obtain an overall mark of 50% in order to pass the course.

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

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

Criterion

The dissertation shall be assessed for Originality, Research quality, Legal analysis, Argument structure, Clarity and style, Citation & authority, Substance, Conclusion.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Strong evidence of original thought, innovative approach to the topic, displays extensive research, comprehensive literature review, in-depth legal analysis, a clear, concise, coherent, and well-structured argument with logical flow, adherence to OSCOLA referencing style, all sources correctly cited, evidence of extensive knowledge of the topic, strong & effective conclusion.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Some original thought, good research, relevant literature review, some good critical analysis, sound application of the law, good evidence of logical argument, mostly clear structure, Presents clear, good academic writing style with minor errors, strong evidence of knowledge of the topic, good conclusion.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Limited originality relying on existing ideas, basic research, some relevant sources identified, basic/limited legal analysis, some application of law, basic argument, some structure, lacks clarity, adequate writing style, several errors, fairly consistent referencing with several errors, evidence of some familiarity of the topic, a weak conclusion.

Marginal

(D) Minimal originality, minimal research, lacks depth, few relevant sources, weak application of the law, weak argument, poor structure, lacks coherence, poor academic writing, inconsistent referencing with many errors, weak evidence of familiarity of the topic, a poor conclusion.

Failure

(F) No originality, little to no research, irrelevance, little/no legal analysis, no clear argument, poorly structured, unclear, lacks coherence, lacks adequate writing style, numerous errors, poor/no referencing, little/no evidence of familiarity of the topic, no/poor conclusion.

Assessment Task

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

Criterion

The dissertation shall be assessed for Originality, Research quality, Legal analysis, Argument structure, Clarity and style, Citation & authority, Substance, Conclusion.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Strong evidence of original thought, innovative approach to the topic, displays extensive research, comprehensive literature review, in-depth legal analysis, a clear, concise, coherent, and well-structured argument with logical flow, adherence to OSCOLA referencing style, all sources correctly cited, evidence of extensive knowledge of the topic, strong & effective conclusion.

Good

(B+, B) Some original thought, good research, relevant literature review, some good critical analysis, sound application of the law, good evidence of logical argument, mostly clear structure, Presents clear, good academic writing style with minor errors, strong evidence of knowledge of the topic, good conclusion.

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Limited originality relying on existing ideas, basic/weak research, minimal/some relevant sources identified, basic/limited legal analysis, minimal/some application of law, basic/limited argument, some structure, lacks clarity, weak/inadequate writing style, several errors, fairly consistent referencing with several errors, evidence of some familiarity of the topic, a weak conclusion.

Failure

(F) No originality, little to no research, irrelevance, little/no legal analysis, no clear argument, poorly structured, unclear, lacks coherence, lacks adequate writing style, numerous errors, poor/no referencing, little/no evidence of familiarity of the topic, no/poor conclusion.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Dissertation

There is no formal syllabus. Students will be required to undertake individually supervised research and dissertation preparation.

Reading List**Compulsory Readings**

Title	
1	Nil

Additional Readings

Title	
1	BAHRIJ, John, Hong Kong Legal Research: Methods and Skills (Hong Kong: Sweet & Maxwell Asia, 2007).
2	BLACKMAN, Josh, How To Use Internet For Legal Research (New York: Find/SVP, 1996).
3	CANE, Peter and KRITZER, Herbert, The Oxford Handbook of Empirical Legal Research (Oxford Handbooks in Law) (2012).
4	COTTRELL, Jill, Legal Research: A Guide for Hong Kong Students (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997).
5	Faculty of Law, University of Oxford, Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities (2012).
6	GARNER, Bryan A, Legal Writing in Plain English: A Text with Exercises, 2nd edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
7	HANSON, Sharon, Legal Method & Reasoning, 2nd ed. (London: Cavendish, 2003).

8	HOLLAND, James A & WEBB, Julian S, Learning Legal Rules: A Student's Guide to Legal Method and Reasoning, 6th ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
9	HUTCHISON, Terry, Researching and Writing in Law (Sydney: Lawbook Co, 2002).
10	KUNZ, Christina L, et al., The Process of Legal Research, 5th ed. (Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Law & Business, 2000).
11	MARKESINIS, Basil S, (ed.), Law Making, Law Finding and Law Shaping: The Diverse Influences (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
12	REIMANN, Mathias and ZIMMERMANN, Reinhard, The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Law (Oxford Handbooks) (2008).
13	VOLOKH, Eugene, Academic Legal Writing: Law Review Articles, Student Notes, Seminar Papers, and Getting on Law Review, 4th edn (New York: Foundation Press, 2010).
14	WATT, Robert, Concise Legal Research, 4th ed. (Sydney: Federation Press, 2001).