

PIA6020: SSP CAPSTONE PROJECT

Effective Term

Semester A 2026/27

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

SSP Capstone Project

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

6020

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

Non-standard Duration

Other Course Duration

Semester A (1 credit) + Semester B (2 credits) + Summer (1 credit)

Credit Units

0-4

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

PIA6021 Master's Thesis

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course intends to offer an interdisciplinary exploration and innovative problem solving opportunity for students to co-work as a team to address the sustainability policy and management challenges. Groups of students, drawing on knowledge acquired in the programme and advised by a supervisor, will be challenged to identify a sustainability challenge in developing countries (e.g. Asian countries) and develop an argument as to whether a new policy approach could be effected. The learning task is not meant to reinforce the status quo. Students can devise new or revised approaches in this policy area or critique the policy intention, explaining how unequipped society is to execute the necessary changes.

The course will enable students to undertake an original piece of group research in sustainability policy and management. Each group will tackle a real-world problem, engaging with competing schools of thought and collecting primary research to substantiate their position. The project will strengthen the student's research portfolio, which may prove valuable in their job search and could be included in doctoral study applications. Students are motivated to think critically and reflect on both theoretical and practical questions arising from sustainability policy and management discipline.

Student will take advantage of Hong Kong's location and networks to closely follow the development of sustainability practices, governance, and emerging technologies that could drive the sustainability agenda in China and the wider Asian region, informed at the same time by larger global processes.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Discover new knowledge by identifying and formulating a research project on a major sustainability challenge in the Asian region	15	x	x	x
2	Present and defend the efficacy of the sustainability policies in question	15	x	x	x
3	Critically assess sustainability strategies of companies, governments and non-governmental organizations	15	x	x	x
4	Seek and apply qualitative and quantitative data and materials relevant to the project objectives	15	x	x	x
5	Work and communicate effectively and creatively with others	15	x	x	x
6	Position students to speak to the promise and pitfalls of sustainability policy and management in local, regional and global contexts and the practice of multi-level and cross-sectoral governance	15	x	x	x
7	Support the programme's aim of nurturing future leaders in the field of sustainability to deliver better policy, execution and research	10	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	Supervised group capstone project Students will be asked to identify a sustainability related research topic to be studied with a group of fellow students. In-class in-person teaching/discussion and consultation between the groups and the supervisor. Each group needs to submit a proposal and deliver a group presentation (5% each) by end of Semester A or early in Semester B, as the supervisor sees fit. The principal function of the supervision is to keep the capstone project work focused, relevant, and productive.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	Suggested a total of 22 to 52 hours: An estimated 13 hours in Semester A; 6 hours in Semester B, plus approximately 20 hours to be student-led; 3 hours in Summer, plus approximately 10 hours to be student-led.
2	Peer assessments	Each student must complete a peer review of his/her group members by the course's end.	1, 2, 5, 6, 7
3	Reflective essay	Each student must complete a reflective essay on participation in the group research project.	1, 2, 5, 6, 7

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Group research project: Each group must submit a completed research project presenting the group's findings. In consultation with the group's supervisor, the project's findings may be conveyed through a variety of outputs/ media, though in every case an accompanying written research report shall be submitted as well.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	70	-	No
2	Reflective essay: Each student must complete a Reflective Essay which reflects upon the experience of conducting the project and lessons learnt from the course.	1, 2, 5, 6, 7	15	-	No
3	Peer assessments: Each student must submit a peer assessment of each of his or her group members.	1, 2, 5, 6, 7	15	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Group research project

Criterion

Ability to demonstrate knowledge and skills required to undertake an original discovery research project; quality of critical thinking, review of literature, analysis and evaluation, written communication, and creative findings; ability to integrate theory and practice.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Knowledge and skills required to undertake an original discovery research project is excellently demonstrated and applied. Very high quality of critical thinking, review of literature, analysis and evaluation, written communication, and creative findings. Demonstrate ability to integrate theory and practice.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Knowledge and skills required to undertake an original discovery research project is well demonstrated and applied. Good quality of critical thinking, review of literature, analysis and evaluation, written communication, and creative findings. Some Indication ability to integrate theory and practice.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Knowledge and skills required to undertake an original discovery research project is rudimentarily demonstrated and applied. Fair quality of critical thinking, review of literature, analysis and evaluation, written communication, and creative findings. Limited ability to integrate theory and practice.

Marginal (D)

Knowledge and skills required to undertake an original discovery research project is limited. Superficial critical thinking and limited effort in the review of literature, analysis and evaluation and poor written communication, and limited creative findings. Minimal ability to integrate theory and practice.

Failure (F)

Unable to demonstrate and apply knowledge and skills required to undertake an original discovery research project. No critical thinking and little effort in the review of literature, analysis and evaluation and very poor written communication, and very limited creative findings. No demonstration of the ability to integrate theory and practice.

Assessment Task

Reflective essay

Criterion

Ability to consider and evaluate one's own research experience in a critically reflective manner.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Demonstrate ability to integrate theory and practice.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Some Indication ability to integrate theory and practice.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited ability to integrate theory and practice.

Marginal (D)

Minimal ability to integrate theory and practice.

Failure (F)

No demonstration of the ability to integrate theory and practice.

Assessment Task

Peer assessments

Criterion

Ability to make valid contribution to the group research project

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Outstanding evaluation results

Good (B+, B, B-)

Good evaluation results

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Fair evaluation results

Marginal (D)

Marginal evaluation results

Failure (F)

Below the marginal level

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Supervised group project; literature review; problem identification; qualitative and quantitative research methods; research and writing.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Creswell, John W. and Creswell, David J. 2023. Research Design : Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, Sixth edition. Los Angeles : SAGE.
2	Gray, David E. and Jensen, Eric A. 2025. Doing Research in the Real World, Sixth edition. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd. (UK).
3	Oliver, Paul. 2010. The Student's Guide to Research Ethics. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
4	Ridley, Diana. 2026. The Literature Review: A Step-by-Step Guide for Students, Third edition. London: SAGE.
5	Roberts, C.M. 2019. The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending your Dissertation. Thousand Oaks, California : Corwin, a SAGE Company.
6	Sharp, John A., John Peters, and Keith Howard. 2002. The Management of a Student Research Project. Burlington, VT: Gower.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Recommended Readings:
2	Burke, Jolanta and Dempsey, Majella (2022). Undertaking Capstone Projects in Education: A Practical Guide for Students. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge.
3	Carney, Mark. (2021). Values: Building a Better World for All, New York: Penguin.
4	Gilbert, Nigel. (2009). Researching Social Life, Third Edition, London: Sage.
5	Hawken, Paul (2017) (ed) Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming, New York: Penguin.
6	King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research. Princeton University Press.
7	Mann, Michael E. (2021). The New Climate War: The Fight to Take Back Our Planet, New York: PublicAffairs.
8	Mosley, Layna (2013) (ed) Interview Research in Political Science, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

9	Raworth, Kate (2018). Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist, White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing.
10	Van Thiel, S. (2014). Research methods in public administration and public management: An introduction. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
11	Verhoeven, Pieternella Susanna (2011). Doing research : the hows and whys of applied research, 3rd ed., The Hague : Eleven International Publishing ; Chicago, IL, USA.