

## **REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (MSocSc)**

*(See also General Regulations and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula)*

*These regulations apply to candidates admitted to the Master of Social Sciences in the academic year 2018-19 and thereafter.*

Any publication based on work approved for a higher degree should contain a reference to the effect that the work was submitted to the University of Hong Kong for the award of the degree.

The degree of Master of Social Sciences (MSocSc) is a postgraduate degree awarded for the satisfactory completion of a prescribed course of study in one of the following fields: Behavioral Health; Clinical Psychology; Corporate Environmental Governance; Counselling; Criminology; Educational Psychology; Gerontology; Media, Culture and Creative Cities; Mental Health; Nonprofit Management; Psychology; Social Service Management; and Social Work. These fields of study will not necessarily be offered every year.

### **Admission requirements**

MSS 1. To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences, candidates

- (a) shall comply with the General Regulations and the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
- (b) shall hold
  - (i) a Bachelor's degree of this University; or
  - (ii) another qualification of equivalent standard from this University or from another University or comparable institution accepted for this purpose;
- (c) for a candidate who is seeking admission on the basis of a qualification from a university or comparable institution outside Hong Kong of which the language of teaching and/or examination is not English, shall satisfy the University English language requirement applicable to higher degrees as prescribed under General Regulation G2(b);
- (d) shall satisfy any other admission requirements which may be specified for individual fields of study in the regulations below; and
- (e) shall satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination if required.

MSS 1.1 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the fields of Behavioral Health, Counselling, Gerontology, Mental Health, Social Service Management and Social Work, candidates shall preferably have had a minimum of two years of post-qualification experience in the relevant fields, in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.2 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Clinical Psychology, candidates

- (a) shall hold a Bachelor's degree with a major in Psychology, or a recognized equivalent qualification; and
- (b) shall have had an empirical research dissertation completed in the Bachelor's degree programme or another equivalent programme in psychology in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.3 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences

in the field of Criminology, candidates

- (a) shall hold a Bachelor's degree preferably with a major in the social sciences or humanities discipline; or
  - (b) shall preferably have working experience in the criminal justice system, social welfare agencies, or in other work with offenders,
- in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.4 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Educational Psychology, candidates

- (a) shall hold a Bachelor's degree with a major in Psychology, or a recognized equivalent qualification;
  - (b) shall be eligible for the Graduate Membership of the Hong Kong Psychological Society; and
  - (c) shall preferably have relevant working experience in educational or related settings,
- in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.5 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Nonprofit Management, candidates shall preferably have three years of relevant working experience, in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.6 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Psychology, candidates

- (a) shall hold
    - (i) a Bachelor's degree of this University (in a discipline other than psychology and without completion of any other programme in psychology which is designed to bring the degree holder up to the standard of a graduate majoring in psychology); or
    - (ii) another qualification of equivalent standard from this University or from another University or comparable institution accepted for this purpose (in a discipline other than psychology and without completion of any other programme in psychology which is designed to bring the degree holder up to the standard of a graduate majoring in psychology);
  - (b) shall preferably have more than one year of work experience; and
  - (c) shall satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination and interview if shortlisted,
- in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 2. An application for exemption from the above requirements shall be considered on a case by case basis.

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### **Qualifying examination**

MSS 3.

- (a) A qualifying examination may be set to test the candidates' formal academic ability or their ability to follow the courses of study prescribed. It shall consist of one or more written papers or their equivalent and may include a project report.
- (b) Candidates who are required to satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination shall not be permitted to register until they have satisfied the examiners in the examination.

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### **Award of degree**

MSS 4. To be eligible for the award of the degree of Master of Social Sciences, candidates

- (a) shall comply with the General Regulations and the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula; and
- (b) shall complete the programme as prescribed in the syllabuses and satisfy the examiners in accordance with the regulations set out below.

## **Period of study**

MSS 5. The curriculum shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study; or two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or three academic years of part-time study, unless otherwise specified for individual fields of study in the regulations below.

MSS 5.1 In the field of Clinical Psychology, the programme shall normally extend over two academic years of full-time study, with a maximum period of registration of four academic years of full-time study.

MSS 5.2 In the field of Counselling, the programme shall normally extend over two or three academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of three academic years for the two-year part-time study or four academic years for the three-year part-time study.

MSS 5.3 In the field of Criminology, the programme shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or four academic years of part-time study.

MSS 5.4 In the field of Educational Psychology, the programme shall normally extend over two academic years of full-time study or three academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of four academic years for both full-time and part-time study.

MSS 5.5 In the fields of Media, Culture and Creative Cities, the programme shall normally extend over two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of four academic years of part-time study.

MSS 5.6 In the field of Nonprofit Management, the programme shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study.

MSS 5.7 In the fields of Mental Health, Social Service Management, and Social Work, the programme shall normally extend over two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of three academic years of part-time study.

MSS 6. Candidates shall not be permitted to extend their studies beyond the maximum period of registration specified in the above regulations, unless otherwise permitted or required by the Board of the Faculty.

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## **Advanced Standing**

MSS 7. Advanced Standing may be granted to candidates in recognition of studies completed successfully before admission to the curriculum. Candidates who are awarded Advanced Standing will not be granted any further credit transfer for those studies for which Advanced Standing has been granted. The amount of credits to be granted for Advanced Standing shall be determined by the Board of the Faculty, in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) a candidate may be granted a total of not more than 20% of the total credits normally required under a curriculum for Advanced Standing unless otherwise approved by the Senate; and
  - (b) credits granted for Advanced Standing shall not normally be included in the calculation of the GPA unless permitted by the Board of the Faculty but will be recorded on the transcript of the candidate.
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## **Exemption**

MSS 8. Candidates may be exempted, with or without special conditions attached, from the requirement prescribed in the regulations and syllabuses governing the curriculum with the approval of the Board of the Faculty, except in the case of a capstone experience. Approval for exemption of a capstone experience may be granted only by the Senate with good reasons. Candidates who are so exempted must replace the number of exempted credits with courses of the same credit value.

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## **Progression in curriculum**

MSS 9. Candidates may, with the approval of the Board of the Faculty, transfer credits for courses completed at other institutions during their candidature. The number of transferred credits may be recorded in the transcript of the candidate, but the results of courses completed at other institutions shall not be included in the calculation of the GPA. The combined total number of credits to be granted for Advanced Standing and credit transfer shall not exceed half of the total credits normally required under the curricula of the candidates during their candidature at the University.

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## **Completion of curriculum**

MSS 10. To complete the curriculum, candidates

- (a) shall satisfy the requirements prescribed in TPG 6 of the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
  - (b) shall follow courses of instruction and complete satisfactorily all prescribed written work and field work;
  - (c) shall complete and present a satisfactory dissertation or capstone project as prescribed in the syllabuses; and
  - (d) shall satisfy the examiners in all prescribed courses and in any prescribed form of examination.
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## **Dissertation and Capstone project**

MSS 11. Subject to the provisions of Regulation MSS 10(c), the title of the dissertation or capstone project shall be submitted for approval by not later than March 31 of the final academic year in which the teaching programme ends and the dissertation or capstone project shall be presented by a date as prescribed in the syllabuses for each field of study; candidates shall submit a statement that the dissertation or capstone project represents their own work (or in the case of conjoint work, a statement countersigned by their co-worker(s), which show their share of the work) undertaken after registration as candidates for the degree.

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## **Assessment**

MSS 12. Candidates shall be assessed for each of the courses for which they have registered, and assessment may be conducted in any combination of continuous assessment of coursework, written examinations and/or any other assessable activities. Only passed courses will earn credits.

MSS 13.

- (a) Where so prescribed in the syllabuses, coursework or a dissertation or a capstone project shall constitute part or whole of the examination for one or more courses.
- (b) An assessment of the candidates' coursework during their studies, including completion of written assignments and participation in field work or laboratory work, as the case may be, may be taken into account in determining the candidates' result in each written examination paper; or, where so prescribed in the syllabuses, may constitute the examination of one or more courses.

MSS 14. Candidates shall not be permitted to repeat a course for which they have received a passing grade for the purpose of upgrading.

MSS 15. Candidates who have failed to satisfy the examiners at their first attempt in not more than half of the number of courses to be examined, whether by means of written examination papers or coursework assessment, during any of the academic years of study, may be permitted make up for the failed course(s) in the following manner:

- (a) undergoing re-assessment/re-examination in the failed course; or
- (b) re-submitting failed coursework, without having to repeat the same course of instruction; or
- (c) repeating the failed course by undergoing instruction and satisfying the assessments; or
- (d) for elective courses, taking another course in lieu and satisfying the assessment requirements.

MSS 16. Subject to the provision of Regulation MSS 10(c), candidates who have failed to present a satisfactory dissertation or capstone project may be permitted to submit a new or revised dissertation or capstone project within a specified period.

MSS 17. Candidates who have failed to satisfy the examiners in any prescribed field work/practical work/internship may be permitted to present themselves for re-examination in field work/practical work/internship within a specified period.

MSS 18. Candidates who are unable because of their illness to be present at the written examination of any course may apply for permission to present themselves at a supplementary examination of the same course to be held before the beginning of the following academic year. Any such application shall be made on the form prescribed within two weeks of the first day of the candidate's absence from any examination. Any supplementary examination shall be part of that academic year's examinations, and the provision made in the regulations for failure at the first attempt shall apply accordingly.

MSS 19. There shall be no appeal against the results of examinations and all other forms of assessment.

MSS 20. Candidates who

- (a) are not permitted to present themselves for re-assessment/re-examination in any failed course(s) or to repeat the failed course(s) or take another course in lieu under Regulation MSS 15; or
  - (b) have failed to satisfy the examiners in any course(s) at a second attempt; or
  - (c) are not permitted to submit a new or revised dissertation or capstone project under Regulation MSS 16; or
  - (d) have failed to submit a satisfactory new or revised dissertation or capstone project under Regulation MSS 16; or
  - (e) have exceeded the maximum period of registration.
- may be required to discontinue their studies.

MSS 20.1 In the field of Clinical Psychology, candidates who have failed two external placements or the second attempt of either the external placement or internal practicum may be required to discontinue their studies.

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## Grading systems

MSS 21. Individual courses shall be graded according to the one of the following grading systems:

- (a) Letter grades, their standards and the grade points for assessment as follows:

| <i>Grade</i> | <i>Standard</i> | <i>Grade Point</i> |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| A+           | }               | 4.3                |
|              |                 |                    |

|    |   |              |     |
|----|---|--------------|-----|
| A  |   | Excellent    | 4.0 |
| A- |   |              | 3.7 |
| B+ | } | Good         | 3.3 |
| B  |   |              | 3.0 |
| B- |   |              | 2.7 |
| C+ | } | Satisfactory | 2.3 |
| C  |   |              | 2.0 |
| C- |   |              | 1.7 |
| D+ | } | Pass         | 1.3 |
| D  |   |              | 1.0 |
| F  |   | Fail         | 0   |

or

(b) 'Pass' or 'Fail'.

Courses graded according to (b) above shall not be included in the calculation of the GPA.

### Classification of awards

MSS 22. On successful completion of the curriculum, candidates who have shown exceptional merit may be awarded a mark of distinction, and this mark shall be recorded in the candidates' degree diploma.

## SYLLABUSES FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

### GERONTOLOGY

The Department of Social Work and Social Administration offers a postgraduate programme leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Gerontology. This programme is designed for professionals who are interested in developing a career specialized in working with the elderly and who engage in elderly-related policy research. Applicants from a variety of professional backgrounds may apply for the programme which is designed to meet the diverse training needs of different professional disciplines including social workers, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and other health related workers who are interested in aged care policies and practices. The programme shall extend over not less than one and not more than two academic years of full-time study; or not less than two and not more than three academic years of part-time study, inclusive of intervening vacations.

### EXEMPTION

Candidates may be granted exemption of up to three compulsory courses in recognition of studies completed in related areas. Exemption will only be considered in special circumstances and each application for exemption will be considered on its own merit. Candidates with exemption granted are

required to take an additional elective course to replace the exempted compulsory course to meet the degree requirements.

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## **ASSESSMENTS**

To complete the programme, candidates shall satisfy the examiners in the assessment of courses as prescribed in the programme. Assessments of the courses may be conducted either by course assignments, by presentations, or by written tests, or a combination of both methods. The grading system follows the standard practice in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

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## **CURRICULUM**

Candidates are required to complete 60 credits, including 6 compulsory courses (6 credits each), and 4 elective courses (6 credits each) or 2 elective courses (6 credits each) with a dissertation (12 credits). Candidates can take elective courses from courses in other fields of study under the Master of Social Sciences (Behavioral Health, Mental Health, Social Service Management, Social Work) programmes. Special approval from the respective Programme Directors for the courses in the above-mentioned fields of study is needed.

### **(A) *Compulsory courses***

Candidates shall complete the following courses.

- SOWK6139. Theoretical foundation of human service practices (6 credits)
- SOWK6193. Social gerontology (6 credits)
- SOWK6207. Social policy and ageing (6 credits)
- SOWK6258. Care management (6 credits)
- SOWK6282. Social work intervention with the elderly (6 credits)

### **(B) *Elective courses***

Dissertation option: Candidates shall complete two of the following courses.

Non-dissertation option: Candidates shall complete four of the following courses.

- SOWK6201. Mental health problems in old age (6 credits)
- SOWK6259. Contemporary perspectives on death, dying and bereavement (6 credits)
- SOWK6291. Advanced gerontological seminars (6 credits)
- SOWK6292. Ageing and health (6 credits)
- SOWK6293. Evidence-based programmes in global ageing contexts (6 credits)
- SOWK6318. Advanced gerontological seminars II (6 credits)
- SOWK6319. Advanced gerontological seminars III (6 credits)
- SOWK6320. Advanced gerontological seminars IV (6 credits)

and any other courses offered under Master of Social Sciences (Behavioral Health, Mental Health, Social Service Management, Social Work) programmes

(Note: not all elective courses will necessarily be offered in a given year.)

### ***Capstone Experience Courses***

#### **(C) *Compulsory course***

Candidates opt for either dissertation or non-dissertation option shall complete the following course.

- SOWK6265. Research methods in human service (6 credits)

#### **(D) *Dissertation (Elective)***

Candidates opt for dissertation option shall complete the following course.

- SOWK9002. Dissertation (12 credits)

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## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

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### *Compulsory Courses*

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#### **SOWK6139. Theoretical foundation of human service practices (6 credits)**

The knowledge base of human service practices comes from a wide spectrum of social science disciplines including psychology, sociology and political science. This course will provide the philosophical and conceptual basis for analyzing social problems and issues and translating these theoretical constructs into human service practices.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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#### **SOWK6193. Social gerontology (6 credits)**

This course provides a comprehensive, holistic view of ageing that considers the implications for an older person's interactions with their social and physical environments, including the immediate environment of family, friends, and home, as well as the larger social structure of community, organizations, and society. It also aims to impart knowledge to students about the most important social theories on ageing and the time dimension in the ageing process and its relation to the evolution of larger society.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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#### **SOWK6207. Social policy and ageing (6 credits)**

The course is designed to examine the concepts of social policy and ageing, and the various models available for the analysis of social policy. By analyzing local and foreign services and policy regarding the elderly people, students will become familiar with the roles of government and non-government organizations in implementing public policies. This should further the understanding of the development of social services to meet the needs of the elderly in the context of economic and social change. Basic concepts of social planning, problem identification and programme implementation will be examined.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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#### **SOWK6258. Care management (6 credits)**

Gerontological assessment is the foundation in elder care, whereas care management is one of the major practice strategies to promote effective service delivery to diverse target populations in long term care. Students will be taught to manage and to carry out needs assessment in long term care cases, with reference to the comprehensive assessments developed by international recognized bodies. On top of micro-level direct practice, the course also deals with the establishment of care management programmes in a macro-level, including programme design, development and evaluation.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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#### **SOWK6282. Social work intervention with the elderly (6 credits)**

This course focuses on intervention with older people at micro and macro levels. In macro level, it covers both administrative and community intervention strategies to engage older people in their

communities, to empower older people and their communities for independent living, to promote choices, quality of care, and quality of life in elderly services. In micro level, it covers intervention strategies for intake, comprehensive assessment, treatment and termination involved in working with older clients and their families. It equips students with skills to reach out, engage reluctant or impaired elders, and work in a multidisciplinary team in elderly settings.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

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### ***Elective Courses***

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#### **SOWK6201. Mental health problems in old age (6 credits)**

This course explores the types of mental illnesses among the elderly in Hong Kong. Attention will be put towards the understanding of the causes and treatments of mental illness in the elderly population. A critical review of medical, psychological and social services for the elderly with mental illness will be conducted.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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#### **SOWK6259. Contemporary perspectives on death, dying and bereavement (6 credits)**

Death is an inevitable life experience for everyone. Death-related problem is one of the commonest issues that clients brought to counseling, but is also rated as the most uncomfortable scenario by beginning counselors. This course offers a basic orientation to the knowledge and intervention approaches in working with death-related situations, including end of life care and bereavement counseling. Major theories and models related to death, dying and bereavement would be introduced. Corresponding clinical implications and practical work approaches would also be highlighted. Apart from the knowledge and skills, the course also emphasizes on personal exploration and review on one's attitudes toward life and death issues. It is hoped that students are better equipped with knowledge competence, practice competence as well as self competence in working with death, dying and bereavement.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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#### **SOWK6291. Advanced gerontological seminars (6 credits)**

Globally, aging population leads to both threats and opportunities for social development. New issues relating to gerontology emerge from time to time. This course will bring students one or two emerging gerontological issues each time. For example, social security, housing, health and social care integration, mental health, community empowerment, death, dying and bereavement. Focuses will be put on cutting edge knowledge on selected issues, perspectives from policy, service delivery, and/or program levels.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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#### **SOWK6292. Ageing and health (6 credits)**

According to the WHO, health is a “complete state of physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” As people age, they are increasingly facing challenges in their physical and mental health and in their social wellbeing. A better integrated health and social care system will help older people to better adjust to their aging processes and to minimize the negative impacts of aging to their wellbeing. This course is designed to help students from diverse academic backgrounds to understand the core values, conceptual models, intervention strategies, and service delivery systems of the integrated health and social care model. Building on the foundation values and knowledge of their own disciplines, students will learn how to effectively develop and implement a multi-disciplinary team in geriatric care settings.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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**SOWK6293. Evidence-based programmes in global ageing contexts (6 credits)**

This course aims to help students understand the implications of population ageing and increasing life expectancy in both developed and developing countries although countries in the Asia-Pacific region will be our focus. Cross-national evidence-based programs will be selected from North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America. Specifically, we will illustrate how population ageing varies across the globe and how it affects family support, living arrangements, and intergenerational transfer and relationships. Moreover, the policy and practice implications of population ageing in social, political, and economic dimensions will be discussed.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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**SOWK6318. Advanced gerontological seminars II (6 credits)**

Globally, aging population leads to both threats and opportunities for social development. New issues relating to gerontology emerge from time to time. This course will bring students one or two emerging gerontological issues each time. For example, social security, housing, health and social care integration, mental health, community empowerment, death, dying and bereavement. Focuses will be put on cutting edge knowledge on selected issues, perspectives from policy, service delivery, and/or program levels.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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**SOWK6319. Advanced gerontological seminars III (6 credits)**

Globally, aging population leads to both threats and opportunities for social development. New issues relating to gerontology emerge from time to time. This course will bring students one or two emerging gerontological issues each time. For example, social security, housing, health and social care integration, mental health, community empowerment, death, dying and bereavement. Focuses will be put on cutting edge knowledge on selected issues, perspectives from policy, service delivery, and/or program levels.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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**SOWK6320. Advanced gerontological seminars IV (6 credits)**

Globally, aging population leads to both threats and opportunities for social development. New issues relating to gerontology emerge from time to time. This course will bring students one or two emerging gerontological issues each time. For example, social security, housing, health and social care integration, mental health, community empowerment, death, dying and bereavement. Focuses will be put on cutting edge knowledge on selected issues, perspectives from policy, service delivery, and/or program levels.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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***Capstone Experience Courses***

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**SOWK6265. Research methods in human service (6 credits)**

This course covers the whole research process from the development of research questions and hypotheses to the analysis of data as well as presentation of findings. Different data collection methods including qualitative data collection such as case study, interviews and focus groups; and quantitative data collection such as survey and experiment will be discussed. Data analysis on various types of data including secondary data will be examined. Students will be expected to integrate and apply the

knowledge and skills they acquired through the programme by attending the - integrated seminars organized by the end of the first semester of the final academic year of study.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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**SOWK9002. Dissertation (12 credits)**

The title of the dissertation shall be submitted for approval not later than three months before the formal submission of the dissertation or not later than March 31 of the same academic year of study. The dissertation shall be presented by not later than **August 1** of the same academic year of study. The dissertation shall be a critical study that demonstrates the application of research methodology to the investigation of problems relevant to the field of study, and shall not exceed 20,000 words in length.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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