2025-26

REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (DPA)

(See also General Regulations)

Admission requirements

DPA 1. To be eligible for admission to the programme leading to the degree of Doctor of Public Administration, candidates shall

(a) comply with the General Regulations;
(b) hold a Bachelor's degree and a taught Master's degree in Public Administration or another qualification of equivalent standard from this University or from another University or comparable institution accepted for this purpose;
(c) demonstrate a record of at least 8 years' professional experience in public administration or other related disciplines as may from time to time be judged appropriate by the Programme Committee; and
(d) satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination, if required.

Qualifying examination

DPA 2.

(a) A qualifying examination may be set to test candidates' ability to pursue the research project proposed. A qualifying examination shall consist of one or more invigilated written examination papers; additionally, the invigilated written paper(s) may be supplemented by other forms of examinations.
(b) Candidates who are required to sit a qualifying examination shall not be permitted to register until all examination requirements are satisfied.

Registration

DPA 3. Successful candidates shall in the first instance be granted provisional registration for the DPA degree, such registration to be confirmed only when successful candidates satisfy the requirements set out in Regulation DPA 10 below.

Award of degree

DPA 4. To be eligible for the award of the degree of Doctor of Public Administration, candidates shall

(a) comply with the General Regulations; and
(b) complete the curriculum and satisfy the examiners in accordance with the regulations set out below.

Length of curriculum

DPA 5. The programme shall begin in September of each year that a cohort is admitted to the programme with admissions made in alternate years. The length of study shall normally extend over a period of not less than 48 months and not more than 72 months on part-time basis.

Leave of absence

DPA 6. A candidate who wishes to be absent from the approved course of study or research shall be required to submit a written application for leave of absence. Study leave may be granted for the purposes of study or research outside Hong Kong and non-study leave may be granted when a candidate is best advised for personal, health, or other reasons to have time completely away from his/her academic responsibilities. Unless special circumstances warrant an exception, leave of absence under both categories shall not normally be granted for a cumulative period of more than twelve months for the entire period of study. Any period of study leave granted shall be counted towards the period of study and any period of non-study leave granted shall result in the extension of the period of study by the period of absence.

Completion of curriculum

DPA 7. To complete the curriculum, candidates shall

(a) satisfy examiners in the coursework requirements for the degree as set out in the syllabuses;
(b) complete, to the satisfaction of the examiners, a thesis as specified in Regulation DPA 12 below; and
(c) satisfy examiners at the oral examination.

Coursework requirements

DPA 8. Candidates shall be required to take courses and satisfy the coursework requirements as prescribed in the syllabus. The approved course of study and research includes a compulsory coursework component with formal requirements relating to such coursework being determined, from time to time, by the Policy Board of Postgraduate Education. The coursework requirements must be fulfilled before the candidate is permitted to submit a thesis.

Supervision and progress

DPA 9. Candidates are required to submit a progress report at six-monthly intervals, and may be required to give one or more seminars on any part of their course of study and research.

Probation and confirmation of candidature

DPA10.

(a) Candidates whose applications are accepted shall be subject to a probationary period, which shall not normally exceed 24 months. By the end of the probationary period, candidates must have
    (i) completed the required proportion of coursework as set forth in the programme's curriculum;
    (ii) demonstrated capability in research by completing a Research Proposal to the satisfaction of the supervisor and Programme Director;
    (iii) attended a probation interview; and
    (iv) presented a research seminar.
(b) At the end of the probationary period, a decision shall be made on whether the candidature shall be confirmed or terminated.

Discontinuation

DPA 11. A candidate may be discontinued
(a) if academic progress is not satisfactory; or
(b) if the student has failed to meet the requirements as stipulated in this set of Regulations.

Thesis

DPA 12.
(a) The thesis should be between 50,000 and 60,000 words long (exclusive of tables of cases and statistics, notes, appendices containing material and bibliographies). The thesis must represent an original contribution to knowledge and contain material worthy of publication.
(b) Candidates shall submit four copies of his/her thesis for examination, in accordance with the regulations governing the format, binding and presentation of theses, together with a written statement that the thesis represents their own work undertaken after registration as candidates for the degree.
(c) Candidates shall serve written notice of intention to submit a thesis for examination at least 3 months prior to the expected date of submission. The notice shall be accompanied by a provisional thesis title.
(d) Candidates shall not be permitted to submit a thesis until all coursework requirements have been satisfied.
(e) Candidates shall be examined by examiners appointed for this purpose both on the thesis itself, and at an oral examination on the subject of the thesis and/or the approved course of study and research. Candidates may also be examined by other means.

Thesis examination results

DPA 13.
(a) Candidates who have satisfied the examiners shall be recommended for conferment of the degree of Doctor of Public Administration.
(b) Candidates who have not satisfied the examiners in the thesis component:
    (i) may be required to resubmit the thesis after making corrections and amendments as required by the Board of Examiners, without a new examination; or
    (ii) may be required to revise and resubmit the thesis for a new examination within a specified period, and may also be required to satisfy the examiners at a new oral examination, or any other examination as appropriate, on the subject of the revised thesis and/or the approved course of study and research; or
    (iii) may be required to attend a new oral examination, or any other examination as appropriate; or
    (iv) may be deemed to have failed, without the option of resubmission.

Coursework examinations results

DPA 14.
(a) Coursework shall be assessed on a pass/fail basis.
(b) Candidates who have not satisfied the examiners in respect of the Coursework requirements at the first attempt shall normally be permitted to present themselves for re-examination in the same course. Candidates who do not satisfy the examiners in such re-examination may be required to discontinue their studies.
(c) Candidates who are unable because of their illness to be present for one or more papers in any written examination may apply for permission to present themselves at a supplementary examination to be held before the beginning of the following semester or academic year.

Any such application shall be made in written format within seven calendar days of the first day of the candidates' absence from the examination.

Publication based on thesis

DPA 15. 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.

SYLLABUSES FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

CURRICULUM

Year I

Candidates shall complete all courses from the following list:

POLI6601. Governance: politics, policies and networks
POLI6602. Policy analysis: skills and practice
POLI6603. Workshop in governance research
POLI6604. Collaborative management

Candidates are also required to attend methods training workshops, offered over the summer, to enable them to critically evaluate and apply research methods relevant to their dissertation research.

Year II

Candidates shall complete all courses from the following list:

POLI6605. Ethics and public affairs
POLI6606. Supervised reading in specialty of public administration
POLI6607. Seminar on governance and public affairs in China
POLI6608. Seminar on governance and public affairs in East Asia

Year I or II

Candidates shall complete all courses from the following list:

GRSC6101. Responsible conduct of research
GRSC6102. Stream-based responsible conduct of research

Year III and IV

Candidates shall complete the course from the following list:

POLI9609. Thesis

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

GRSC6101. Responsible conduct of research

This module equips research postgraduate (RPg) students with essential vocabulary, principles, and practices conducive to the promotion of responsible conduct of research in general and in their relevant disciplines. Students will also encounter terminology, texts, and tenets that relate to good conduct in the teaching and research professions. Key research-related issues, including principle of research integrity, mentor-mentee relationship, publication ethics and data

management, as well as pressing RCR topics, will be discussed in view of the University's Policy on Research Integrity (https://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/rcr/policy). This module delivers its content via talks delivered by faculty members/external speakers/GS Programme Director and case discussions facilitated by faculty members.
Assessment: 100% coursework

GRSC6102. Stream-based responsible conduct of research

This module addresses responsible conduct of research in a number of topics germane to different disciplines, and RPg students are required to complete the following three-hour submodule: Working with Human Participants (Humanities) (subclass A&B / Q&R)
The focus of the sub-module on "Working with Human Participants" is to understand the importance of research ethics when working with human participants. The content covers:
- Why it is crucial to comply with Principles on Human Research Ethics
- What are the underpinning Ethical Principles: the Belmont Principles
- Who should apply for ethical review by the Human Research Ethics Committee
- Basic Ethical Principles for Research Involving Human Participants
- What are the types of Review, Relevant Procedures and Possible Outcomes
Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6601. Governance: politics, policies and networks

This course provides an understanding of the key concept of governance in politics and public administration, and its applicability to the study of relevant issues in Hong Kong and China. It addresses different approaches to governance, both normative and empirical, and the "good governance" agenda. Attention is given to the relationship between governance and public sector reform in terms of new public management and the network mode of service delivery, as well as to the dynamics of collaborative governance, civil society and the diversity of organisations involved in policy formulation and service delivery.
Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6602. Policy analysis: skills and practice

Conventional policy analysis has a strong connotation of rational planning and is anchored in the concept of efficiency. New modes of governance have challenged the adequacy of looking at policy analysis simply as a means to achieving efficiency. Policy analysis within new modes of governance requires appreciation and knowledge of designing institutions to harness the dynamics of collective action in multiple scales and levels, as well as the necessary skills to juggle the concerns of efficiency, transparency, accountability, and democracy.
Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6603. Workshop in governance research

This course introduces to students the logic and practice of social research design and methods. Specifically, it examines the logic of inference, issues involved in qualitative and quantitative inquiries, and alternative approaches to research design. The purpose of the course is pragmatic—it strives to equip students with necessary knowledge and skills to design a research project that can lead to a dissertation or research papers. The course will also examine the challenges and constraints that a researcher might face in conducting social research, and the possible ways to meet these challenges.
Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6604. Collaborative management

A governance perspective focuses our attention on the management of the "extended state." The course examines various issues involved in the more complex nature of managing public services straddling the great divides between the state, markets, and civil society. In particular, the course focuses on inter-jurisdictional collaboration, third-party governance, network governance, collective action in multiple scales, and the engagement of civil society in policymaking and governance.
Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6605. Ethics and public affairs

One of the central principles of a liberal society is that citizens irrespective of race, gender, religion, or other irrelevant characteristics should have an equal opportunity to access to rights, goods and services available in a given society. Although well enshrined in anti-discrimination laws in many liberal societies, this intuitively simple principle conceals conceptual difficulties and moral controversies. This course explores these difficult questions by analyzing the concept, principles and hard cases of discrimination, with reference to such policy issues as race, gender, sexual orientation, and age.
Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6606. Supervised reading in specialty of public administration

The course is tailor-made for one-to-one supervision concerning particular bodies of literature that are relevant to individual specialties and research interests. Through intensive reading and a focus on research methods supporting a critical evaluation of relevant literature, an important end product of the course is a robust literature review of major theoretical and policy issues on which the dissertation research can be formulated and undertaken. The course will enable a fine-tuning of dissertation writing and research methodology skills.
Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6607. Seminar on governance and public affairs in China

The course is focused principally on governance experience in China, including Hong Kong. The coordinator will invite senior practitioners from government, policy advocates, and political actors to discuss critical policy issues on the understanding that Chatham House rules apply. Departmental members would also make significant contributions to the seminar based, for example, on their research, such as on civic engagement and participatory governance.
Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6608. Seminar on governance and public affairs in East Asia

The course provides an opportunity for students to learn the latest developments in public governance and policy in East Asia, and will be organized in a workshop format emphasizing intensive learning and active participation of students. Distinguished scholars from various East Asian countries will be invited to contribute to the teaching of the course. The topics to be covered may vary each year, but they will cover governance issues, such as hybrid public-private partnerships, transnational linkages, civic engagement, and network governance.
Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI9609. Thesis

Candidates will complete a thesis of 50,000 to 60,000 words. The thesis will be assessed on the basis of being (i) an original contribution to knowledge and/or the understanding of educational practice and, (ii) containing material worthy of publication. Candidates will also participate in thesis seminars commencing after confirmation of candidature which will contribute to their research programmes and will serve as forums for presenting their work in progress on a regular basis.
Assessment: 100% coursework