

**REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF CHINA DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
(MChDS)**

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

These regulations apply to candidates admitted to the Master of China Development Studies in the academic year 2026-27 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.

Admission requirements

MCDS 1. To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of China Development Studies, candidates

- (a) shall comply with the General Regulations and the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
- (b) shall hold a Bachelor's degree of this University or a qualification of equivalent standard from this University or 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); and
- (d) shall satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination if required.

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

Qualifying examination

MCDS 3.

- (a) A qualifying examination may be set to test candidates' formal academic ability or the candidates' 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.

Award of degree

MCDS 4. To be eligible for the award of the degree of Master of China Development Studies, candidates

- (a) shall comply with the General Regulations and the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula; and
 - (b) shall complete the curriculum and satisfy the examiners in accordance with the regulations set out below.
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Period of study

MCDS 5. The curriculum shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study. Candidates shall not be permitted to extend their studies beyond the maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or four academic years of part-time study, unless otherwise permitted or required by the Board of the Faculty.

Completion of curriculum

MCDS 6. To complete the curriculum of Master of China Development Studies, candidates (either full-time or part-time)

- (a) shall satisfy the requirements prescribed in TPG 6 of the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
 - (b) shall complete a total of 60 credits of courses, i.e.
 - (i) for non-dissertation option – 12 credits of compulsory courses + 42 credits of elective courses + 6 credits of capstone experience course (i.e. “Research methods and directed project in China development studies”); or
 - (ii) for dissertation option – 12 credits of compulsory courses + 30 credits of elective courses + 18 credits of capstone experience courses (i.e. “Research methods and directed project in China development studies” and “Dissertation in China development studies”);
 - (c) shall follow courses of instruction and complete satisfactorily all prescribed written work; and
 - (d) shall satisfy the examiners in all prescribed courses and in any prescribed form of assessment (including coursework and oral examination).
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Dissertation

MCDS 7. Subject to the provisions of Regulation MCDS 6(b)(ii), this regulation is applicable only to the students who choose the “dissertation option”

- (a) for the full-time study, the title of the dissertation shall be submitted for approval not later than April 30 of that academic year;
 - (b) for the part-time study, the title of the dissertation shall be submitted for approval not later than April 30 in the candidates’ final year of study; and
 - (c) both full-time and part-time candidates shall submit a statement declaring that the dissertation represents their own work undertaken after registration as candidates for the degree.
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Course selection

MCDS 8.

- (a) For candidates under the one-year full-time mode of study:
 - (i) those who follow the non-dissertation option are required to take at least 24 and not more than 36 credits of courses in the first semester, and the remaining 24 to 36 credits of courses in the second semester; or
 - (ii) those who follow the dissertation option are required to take at least 30 and not more than 36 credits in the first semester, and the remaining 24 or 30 credits of courses (including the dissertation) in the second semester.
 - (b) For candidates under the two-year part-time mode of study:
 - (i) those who follow the non-dissertation option are required to take at least 30 and not more than 36 credits of courses in the first year of study, and the remaining 30 or 24 credits of courses in the second year of study; or
 - (ii) those who follow the dissertation option are required to take at least 30 and not more than 36 credits of courses in the first year of study, and the remaining 24 or 30 credits of courses (including the dissertation) in the second year of study.
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Assessment

MCDS 9. 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.

MCDS 10. Candidates shall not be permitted to repeat a course for which they have received a passing grade for the purpose of upgrading.

MCDS 11. Candidates who have failed to satisfy the examiners at their first attempt in not more than two courses, not including the dissertation, in an academic year may be permitted to make up for the failed course(s) in the following manner:

- (a) undergoing re-assessment/re-examination in the failed course to be held on a specified date not less than two months and not more than twelve months after publication of the results; 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.

MCDS 12. Candidates who have presented an unsatisfactory dissertation in an academic year may be permitted to revise and re-submit the dissertation within a specified period of not less than two months and not more than twelve months after publication of the results.

MCDS 13. Candidates who

- (a) have failed to satisfy the examiners at the first attempt in three or more courses, not including the dissertation, in an academic year; or
- (b) have failed to satisfy the examiners in any course(s) or the dissertation at the second attempt; or
- (c) 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; or.

- (d) are not permitted to revise and re-submit the dissertation which they have presented and failed to satisfy the examiners; or
- (e) have exceeded the maximum period of registration may be required to discontinue their studies.

MCDS 14. 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 for a supplementary examination of the same course, which shall be held at a time to be determined by the Board of Examiners. Any such application shall be made on the form prescribed within seven calendar days of the first day of the candidate's absence from any examination. Candidates who fail to satisfy the examiners in the supplementary examination shall be considered as failure at the first attempt.

MCDS 15. There shall be no appeal against the results of examinations and all other forms of assessment.

Grading system

MCDS 16. Individual courses shall be graded according to the following grading system:

<i>Grade</i>		<i>Standard</i>	<i>Grade Point</i>
A+	}	Excellent	4.3
A			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

Classification of awards

MCDS 17. 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 CHINA DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (MChDS)

These syllabuses apply to candidates admitted to the Master of Arts in China Development Studies in the academic year 2026-27 and thereafter.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum provides an opportunity to local and international students for systematic training and independent research on development issues in contemporary China.

Candidates are required to complete a total of 60 credits by taking either

- (a) a total of 2 compulsory courses (6 credits each), 7 elective courses (6 credits each) and the capstone experience course “GEOG7136 Research methods and directed project in China development studies” (6 credits) for the “non-dissertation” option; or
- (b) a total of 2 compulsory courses (6 credits each), 5 elective courses (6 credits each) and the two capstone experience courses “GEOG7136 Research methods and directed project in China development studies” (6 credits) and “GEOG7122 Dissertation in China development studies” (12 credits) for the “dissertation” option.

An adequate number of elective courses will be offered to students in each academic year. Each course entails one session of two lecture hours per week over one semester.

Compulsory Courses

Candidates shall complete all of the following two courses:

- GEOG7101. The Chinese economies: location, transformation, and integration (6 credits)
- GEOG7120. Urban China: cultural basis and contemporary issues (6 credits)

Elective Courses

Candidates shall complete either seven (non-dissertation option) or five (dissertation option) of the following courses:

- GEOG7116. Field trip (6 credits)
- GEOG7117. Public policies and regional development (6 credits)
- GEOG7124. Globalization and spatial economic transformation in China (6 credits)
- GEOG7126. Cultural tourism in Hong Kong, Macau and South China (6 credits)
- GEOG7129. Climate change, environmental resources and human carrying capacity in China (6 credits)
- GEOG7137. Land and housing in China (6 credits)
- GEOG7141. Politics of contemporary China (6 credits)
- GEOG7142. Big Data and GIS for China development studies (6 credits)
- GEOG7143. Green and blue infrastructure in China (6 credits)
- GEOG7144. Quantitative and spatial methods in social research (6 credits)
- GEOG7145. Innovation and knowledge generation in city-regions (6 credits)
- GEOG7146. Sustainability transitions in China: Theories, policies and practices (6 credits)

- GEOG7147. The Greater Bay Area: Economy, governance, and regional integration (6 credits)
- GEOG7148. Tackling natural hazards on the China coast: Resilience, adaptation and restoration (6 credits)

Capstone Experience Courses

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

GEOG7136. Research methods and directed project in China development studies (6 credits)

Candidates opt for dissertation option shall also be required to complete the following compulsory course:

GEOG7122. Dissertation in China development studies (12 credits)

The schedule for the teaching of courses conforms to the dates of semesters of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Courses will be examined by a combination of coursework assessment and a written examination, normally held at the end of the semester, or by coursework assessment alone.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Compulsory Courses

GEOG7101. The Chinese economies: location, transformation, and integration (6 credits)

This course provides an overview of the location, transformation, and integration of regional economies in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau. Major theoretical perspectives are introduced to explain the growth dynamics of the Chinese economies, the shifting spatial distribution of economic activities and their outward direct investment flows across the globe.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

GEOG7120. Urban China: cultural basis and contemporary issues (6 credits)

China is experiencing rapid urbanisation and profound urban change, which can be viewed as reflecting the transformation of the society as a whole. In this course we will disentangle the different facets of urbanisation in order to understand the processes, outcomes and related problems. We analyse the cultural basis of contemporary Chinese cities by looking into the pre-socialist and socialist legacies, the dynamic institutional setup, and the influences of international urbanism and consumption culture. This is a course in human geography that understands cities as economic, social and cultural spatial systems within a broader context. The purpose of the course is to help students understand these systems, including their origins and transformations, and what they mean for China and for the rest of the world. It offers a detailed empirical view of China's urbanization and a rigorous conceptual understanding of city development through close readings of key works in the field of Chinese urban geography and urban studies.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

Elective Courses

GEOG7116. Field trip (6 credits)

This programme-based field trip is designed to provide opportunities for students to examine first hand development issues and problems related to China. Students are encouraged to incorporate what they have learned from the field trip into their dissertations or directed projects.

Assessment: 100% coursework

GEOG7117. Public policies and regional development (6 credits)

This is a seminar-type course about the concepts, theories, and practices of regional development. Course contents include the changing interpretations of the meanings of regional development; key policy issues in the practice of regional development such as central-local relations, transnational capital, global production networks, old industrial region revitalization, metropolitan development, industrial clusters, innovation and learning regions; and different approaches to regional development in selected world regions including North America, Western Europe, East Asia and China. The objective is to assist students to develop critical thinking in the evaluation of different perspectives and competing interpretations about the nature and dynamics of public policy and regional development in different historical and geographic contexts.

Assessment: 60% coursework, 40% examination

GEOG7124. Globalization and spatial economic transformation in China (6 credits)

This course emphasizes on the combination of theory and practical knowledge and skill, aiming to help students develop perspectives for analyzing the interplay between China's spatial development and globalization. The objectives are to enhance students' comprehensive ability of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as their ability of identifying, examining, and judging business opportunity and challenges as well as problems in the face of globalization era. First, we will examine how China has been increasingly integrated with the world economy and become globalizing. Second, by investigating into important issues such as China's outward investments in Africa and Latin America, we ask how the rise of China as global economic power is reshaping the landscape of the world economy. Important globalization theories and theories of China's post-Mao development will be introduced and examined critically throughout the semester. We will re-think the role China plays in connecting with the world and the impact of globalization on China's ever changing spatial economic development. Throughout the course, students are encouraged to share their first-hand experience on the transformation of the Chinese economy.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

GEOG7126. Cultural tourism in Hong Kong, Macau and South China (6 credits)

Cultural tourism offers a promising alternative to conventional tourism development, which also contributes to the preservation of the heritage and customs of the place. This course arouses students' interests in exploring the rapid development of cultural tourism in Hong Kong, Macau and the South China region. This course has three main objectives. First, it aims to introduce the development and characteristics of cultural tourism in Hong Kong, Macau and South China regions. Second, the course aims to let students understand the unique mixed cultural and urban features in the region. Third, the course prompts students to have an awareness on the sustainable management of heritages in Hong Kong, Macau and South China regions. The course examines the dynamic relationship among conservation, sustainable management, social and cultural factors, stakeholders' interests, tourism marketing and development trends, with various lectures, fieldworks and selected case study projects.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

GEOG7129. Climate change, environmental resources and human carrying capacity in China (6 credits)

The course introduces the concept of human carrying capacity in China. The capacity symbolizes the balance between population size and environmental resources. In Chinese history, it is shown that the human carrying capacity was periodically shrunk by climate deterioration and human-induced environmental degradation, resulting in catastrophic social consequences such as wars, population collapses and even dynastic changes. Based upon the lessons of the past, together with recent trends in climate change and social development, the human carrying capacity in contemporary China will be systematically examined. Some controversial issues related to man-environment interaction will also be discussed.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

GEOG7137. Land and housing in China (6 credits)

The general aim of this course is to highlight and explain the roles of land governance and housing provision for the development of China. It will introduce land as a key resource and explain the fundamental changes both of land use and land management in China. In view of rapid urbanisation, special attention will be paid to the conversion of farm and rural land into built-up and urban land. Land policies profoundly influence the economic, environmental and social development of the country. This is discussed in the context of the so-called new urbanisation policies and the paradigm of sustainable development. Within the development process, the provision of quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient housing is essential for the social development and political stability of the country. Housing supply is therefore a major, although not the only, driving force of land development. The course analyses the roles of the state, the real estate industry and individuals in housing provision and governance. It views housing not just as a physical shelter, but also as a home and part of a broader neighbourhood.

Assessment: 100% coursework

GEOG7141. Politics of contemporary China (6 credits)

This course examines the ideology, institutions, and processes of the contemporary Chinese political system and offers a critical assessment of the social, economic and political changes unfolding in China. The Chinese Communist revolution in 1949 has profound repercussions for China and the world community. The first three decades of the People's Republic of China were characterized by drastic socio-economic transformation and political mobilization initiated by Mao Zedong. China's post-Mao leaders have not only abandoned Mao's radicalism, but also attempted to reform the socialist economic and political systems and open up the country to the outside world. China's reform policy since 1978 has produced major achievements in a variety of areas, despite periodic disruptions and continuing difficulties in some sectors. China's recent economic development and growing role in international affairs have attracted worldwide attention. Studying China's governance will constitute a key issue on the scholarly and policy agendas of many countries for years to come.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

GEOG7142. Big Data and GIS for China development studies (6 credits)

This course is an introductory course to big data and geographic information science (GIS) for China development studies. Big data can be referred to as the high volume, diversity and velocity of data. GIS is a science that creates, manages, analyzes, and maps all types of data. Big data and GIS are employed in this course to provide fundamental and quantitative datasets and technology for China development applications, i.e., urban socioeconomic analysis, urban expansion driving factors analysis, environment deterioration analysis. Census data, crowdsourcing data, and remote sensing data and etc. will be used and the spatial analysis and geoprocessing methods will be introduced. The advanced big data and GIS analysis techniques are essential tools to support urban planning, resource management, environment assessment and policy making in social, economic and environment context, which can further support studies on China's sustainable development.

Assessment: 100% coursework

GEOG7143. Green and blue infrastructure in China (6 credits)

The course aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concepts, principles, and practices related to the development and management of green and blue infrastructure systems in China. With a focus on sustainable urban development and environmental conservation, this course explores the importance of integrating natural elements into urban landscapes to enhance ecological functionality, biodiversity, and resilience. The course will delve into the various components of green and blue infrastructure, including parks, green spaces, urban forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and coastal areas. Students will examine the historical, cultural, and regulatory contexts that have shaped the development of green and blue infrastructure in China, along with the associated challenges and opportunities.

Through lectures, case studies, discussions and group project, students will gain practical knowledge and skills to analyze, plan, and design green and blue infrastructure systems in the context of urban development in China. The course will also emphasize the importance of stakeholder engagement, community participation, and interdisciplinary collaboration in achieving successful outcomes.

By the end of the course, students will have a comprehensive understanding of the significance of green and blue infrastructure for sustainable urban development and environmental conservation in China, and will be equipped with the tools and knowledge to contribute to the planning and management of such systems.

Assessment: 100% coursework

GEOG7144. Quantitative and spatial methods in social research (6 credits)

The course aims to teach students the basic knowledge of quantitative methods and spatial analytic methods in social sciences studies. With reference to different types of research questions in the social sciences discipline, it helps students select appropriate research methods to answer research questions, and to be able to conduct analysis therefore. The combination of statistical techniques and spatial analytic skills allows students to explore the nexus between the environment and behaviours, thereby identifying underlying factors. Policy implications will be discussed based on the findings.

Assessment: 100% coursework

GEOG7145. Innovation and knowledge generation in city-regions (6 credits)

This course examines theoretical and empirical research that addresses two of the key themes related to the process of innovation in a knowledge-based economy: the process by which new knowledge is created and effectively transferred; and the paradoxical relationship between knowledge generation and proximity in a modern global economy. In doing so, this course surveys the current state of knowledge concerning regional economic development, knowledge circulation, innovation, and globalization. This course further explores the implications of this understanding for public policies designed to promote the growth of dynamic city regions.

Assessment: 100% coursework

GEOG7146. Sustainability transitions in China: Theories, policies and practices (6 credits)

China is currently undergoing a profound and structural transformation across all societal sectors, driven by its national commitment to ecological civilization and socialist modernization. This course delves into the theoretical and practical aspects of China's ongoing shift towards sustainability. The course is structured around three main components. First, it provides a comprehensive introduction to the theories, concepts, and analytical frameworks within the field of sustainability transitions. Particular emphasis is placed on the strands of geography of sustainability transitions and corporate sustainability transitions (e.g., ESG management) as well as their relevance to the China context. Second, it scrutinizes the governance of sustainability transitions in China, exploring this aspect at various scales. Third, the course concentrates on key sectors such as energy and transportation, offering in-depth empirical insights into China's sustainability initiatives and their broader societal implications.

Assessment: 100% coursework

GEOG7147. The Greater Bay Area: Economy, governance, and regional integration (6 credits)

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) is a dynamic and rapidly evolving mega-city region, serving as the leading hub for technological, economic, social, and cultural development in China and globally. Delving into the multifaceted aspects that define and shape the GBA, this course aims to offer students a comprehensive understanding of the region's economic dynamics, governance structures, urbanization processes, and planning strategies. First, we will explore the process of regional economic development, examining the driving forces behind its economic growth and emphasizing the crucial roles of infrastructure connectivity and the regional innovation system. Second, we will explore how various governance structures within the GBA influence regional cooperation and cohesion. Next, we will examine the key aspects of rapid urbanization in the GBA, encompassing population dynamics, built environment, spatial structure, and the promotion of sustainable development. Finally, by examining the opportunities and challenges facing the GBA alongside the planning strategies, we will attempt to envision the futures of this area.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

GEOG7148. Tackling natural hazards on the China coast: Resilience, adaptation and restoration (6 credits)

The China coast is home to more than 40% of the nation's population and host economic hubs that are worth for half of the gross domestic product (GDP) to the country. Since the onset of industrial revolution, human induced climate change has been posing societal and economic threat on the coastal community in China. These hazards stem from climate change, including shifting climate pattern, extreme weather and sea-level rise, have resulted in loss of life and economic loss and are expected to intensify in the 21st century. As the causes of these subsequent hazards are not solely natural or anthropogenic, understanding their causes, mechanisms, and impacts from both physical and social perspective can enhance future prediction and mitigation, ultimately reducing risk and promoting a sustainable future.

Assessment: 100% coursework

Not all elective courses will necessarily be offered in a given year.

Capstone Experience Courses

GEOG7122. Dissertation in China development studies (12 credits)

The dissertation shall be a structured presentation of findings of guided independent research on a topic which addresses a topic of China's development issues. The topic shall be chosen by the candidate and the dissertation shall be 10,000-20,000 words. Candidates are expected to present the dissertation orally in the Contemporary China Seminars series and in written form as well. The date for submitting the dissertation would be announced at the start of the first year of study (for full-time candidates) or at the start of the final year of study (for part-time candidates).

Assessment: 100% coursework

GEOG7136. Research methods and directed project in China development studies (6 credits)

This is a course on the nature and methods of research in social, economic, and spatial developments in China. Topics to be covered will include the identification of research problems, preparation of a research proposal, formulation of research questions and research hypotheses, collection of data from various sources, critical assessment of the data collected from China, different techniques of data analysis, and presentation of research findings. The purpose is to introduce to students a workable framework for independent research and to demonstrate how statistical techniques could be utilized to solve various research problems concerning China's economic growth and spatial transformation, through the writing of a directed project.

Assessment: 100% coursework

Additional Pedagogic Requirements

Contemporary China Seminars

Candidates will be required to attend a series of seminars to be offered by scholars, Government officers, and business elites from Hong Kong, Mainland China and overseas on the development issues in contemporary China. They may also be required to present findings from their independent dissertation research in the seminar series. Attendance in the seminars is required.

Coursework

Candidates must satisfy the examiners in coursework assessment for each of the courses taken. The assessment of coursework will include written assignments, candidates' seminar presentations, their role as discussants in other candidates' seminars, their general contribution to seminars, and other relevant activities, including field trips.
