Subject Description Form

Subject Code	APSS3220
Subject Title	Doing Policy Research
Credit Value	3
Level	3
Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion	Pre-requisite: APSS345 Social Research Methods APSS451 Social Policy
Assessment Methods	

100% Continuous Assessment	Individual Assessment	Group Assessment
1. Documentary Research Assignment	30%	--
2. Seminar Presentation and Participation	20%	--
3. Group Project Report	--	50%

Objectives	The subject aims at familiarizing students with the basic research methods for gathering basic information for social policy formulation, assessment and development. Specifically, quantitative and qualitative methods commonly used in policy research and assessing policy impacts, such as data extraction (especially from Census and government sources), trend analysis, bench marking, focus group interviews and stakeholder analysis will be explored.
Intended Learning Outcomes	Upon completion of the subject, students will develop the competence to articulate: a. A basic **understanding** of the methods commonly used in social policy research in government and non-government institutional contexts. b. **Ability** to conduct basic social policy research and perform specific tasks for collecting data for policy formulation, assessment and development in comparative contexts. c. **Knowledge** to prepare policy research and participate in the process and assess the consequences associated with social policy formulation, analysis and development.

Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus	1. The Nature of Policy Research: Context, Characteristics and Research Process
	    • Policy Process
	    • Needs Identification
	    • Advocacy
	    • Policy Formulation
	    • Impact Assessment
	    • Evidence and Outcome-based Evaluation
	    • Ethics
	
	2. Conceptualizing Policy Research: Research Design and Approaches
	    • Quantitative, Qualitative or Mixed Methods
	    • Policy Integration
	
	3. Policy Research Methods I: Documentary Research
	    • Using Census Data
	    • Trend Analysis
	    • Benchmarking
	    • Best Practice
	
	4. Policy Research Methods II: Understanding Stakeholders
	    • Stakeholder Analysis
	    • Focus Group Interview
	
	5. Policy Research Methods III: Public Consultation, Participation and Engagement
	    • Survey Methods Revisited
	    • Using Reference Groups
	    • Think Tanks/Roundtables
	    • E-Consultation
	
	6. Making Recommendations and Communicating Research to Policy-makers
	    • Data Analysis and Making Recommendations
	    • Preparing Research Reports
	    • Communicating Findings
	    • Use of Appropriate Languages and Style
	    • Reflexivity

Teaching/Learning Methodology	This subject will engage students in a variety of teaching and learning methods. Interactive lectures and workshops are expected to be conversant with the common paradigms and frameworks currently embedded in understanding and practicing social policy research. Group project activities will further allow students to acquire practical knowledge, skills and specific techniques commonly required for conducting social policy research along with experiences in developing empathy, responsibility and sensitivity in performing social policy research activities.

Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes							

Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)					
		a	b	c	d	e	
1. Documentary Research Assignment	30%	√	√	√			
2. Seminar Presentation and Participation	20%	√	√	√			
3. Policy Group Project	50%	√	√	√			
Total	100 %						

Documentary Research Assignment:

Students will write a 2,000-word literature review on the basic information they collected from library research on a selected social policy. This will allow students to demonstrate their library research skills and their competence in conducting content analysis and drawing policy conclusions from their researched materials.

Seminar Presentation and Participation:
Students will present their research findings on a selected policy area in seminar as assigned. They will be expected to prepare a document or PowerPoint presentation summarizing and identifying the key points emerging from their research for seminar discussion to illustrate their competence and effectiveness in public presentation and communication.

Policy Group Project
Students will involve in a group project designed to research on the various dimensions inherited in a selected social policy and submit a 5,000 word group report on their findings and recommendations for policy options. In this exercise, students are not only expected to demonstrate their research ability but also their capacity for working as a team, coordinating research activities and integrating findings from individual tasks to form a unified policy document.

Student Study Effort Required		
Class contact:		
▪ Lectures		27 Hrs.
▪ Seminars		12 Hrs.
Other student study effort:		
▪ Preparation of documentary research assignment		25 Hrs.
▪ Seminar presentation and participation		25 Hrs.
▪ Self-directed studies: research and reading		120 Hrs.
Total student study effort		209 Hrs.

Medium of Instruction	English supplemented with Chinese
Medium of Assessment	English
Reading List and References	**Essential** Becker, S. & Bryman, A. (eds) (2004) *Understanding Research for Social Policy and Practice: Themes, Methods and Approaches*. Bristol**:** The Policy Press. Haas, P.J. and Springer, F. (1998) *Applied Policy Research: Concepts and Cases*. New York: Garland Publications. **Supplementary** Bessant, J. Watts, R., Dalton, T. & Smyth, P. (2005) *Policy Talk*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin. Bickman, L. & Rog, D.J. (eds). (2009) *The SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods.* CA: Sage Publications. Coers, M. (2002) *Benchmarking: a Guide for Your Journey to Best-practice processes***.** Houston, Tex: American Productivity & Quality Center**.** Edwards, M (2001) *Social Policy, Public Policy: From Problem to Practice*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin. Heaton, J. (2004) *Reworking Qualitative Data.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Heck, R.H. (2004) *Studying Educational and Social Policy: Theoretical Concepts and Research Methods***.** Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Marston, G. (2004) *Social Policy and Discourse Analysis: Policy Change in Public Housing*. Aldershot: Ashgate. McCulloch, G. (2004) *Documentary Research in Education, History, and the Social Sciences*. London ; New York: Routledge Falmer. Productivity & Quality Center (2002) *Applying Benchmarking Skills.* Houston, Texas**:** American Productivity & Quality Center. Scott, S. (ed) (2006) *Documentary Research.* London: Sage Publications. Stone, D. and Denham, A. (eds) (2004) *Think Tank Traditions: Policy research and the Politics of Ideas.* Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press; New York: Palgrave.