

Subject Description Form

Subject Code	APSS431																	
Subject Title	Thesis in Applied Psychology																	
Credit Value	6																	
Level	4																	
Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion	<p><u>Pre-requisite</u> :</p> <p>Statistics for Human Service Professionals (APSS339) and</p> <p>Social Research Methods (APSS345) and</p> <p>Research Methods in Applied Psychology: Let the Data Speak (APSS489)</p>																	
Assessment Methods	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 60%;">100% Continuous Assessment</th> <th style="width: 20%;">Individual Assessment</th> <th style="width: 20%;">Group Assessment</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Competence in conducting a piece of empirical research</td> <td style="text-align: center;">20%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">--</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Conceptualization of problem and quality of literature review</td> <td style="text-align: center;">30%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">--</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Interpretation of findings and generation of knowledge and theory</td> <td style="text-align: center;">30%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">--</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Language Proficiency</td> <td style="text-align: center;">20%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">--</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>At the end of completing the thesis, two formal evaluation reports on the quality of the thesis will be written by the Thesis Supervisor and an internal second examiner. A student's overall performance and quality of the Thesis will be graded (moderated by the Thesis coordinator), according to the HKPolyU's subject grade system, and credits will be counted in the GPA calculation. To encourage precision and clarity, the students are normally required to submit a thesis report of about 30 double-spaced, typewritten pages (or between 7,000 to no more than 10,000 words), with a view that the submitted thesis may have the potential to be revised and strengthened into such a length and substance publishable by journals in psychology or related discipline. Students will be commended for producing scholarly work of publishable quality. An Outstanding Thesis Award will be granted each year to deserving recipient(s).</p>			100% Continuous Assessment	Individual Assessment	Group Assessment	1. Competence in conducting a piece of empirical research	20%	--	2. Conceptualization of problem and quality of literature review	30%	--	3. Interpretation of findings and generation of knowledge and theory	30%	--	4. Language Proficiency	20%	--
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Objectives	<p>In general, the final-year Thesis is to reflect evidence of sound knowledge, and independent critical and creative thinking in students to justify for an award of BA (Hons) APY. Its objectives are therefore to enable students to achieve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integration of classroom learning with empirical observations and application of theoretical concepts into research practice; 2. Critical examination of a topic of interest in applied psychology with methods of 																	

	<p>scientific inquiry of choice in students' work places, or real-life settings, as assigned by the Department;</p> <p>3. Demonstration of the ability to present and sustain an argument(s), collect and analyze information, make use of and revisit psychological theories, and suggest implications.</p> <p>The Thesis is an essential component in the fulfillment of membership requirement for many local and overseas professional psychological associations. It is a two-semester subject carrying a weight of 6 credits, undertaken in the final stage of study.</p>
<p>Intended Learning Outcomes (Note 1)</p>	<p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify a topic of interest in an area(s) of applied psychology taught in the program; b. Select and design a methodology for conducting an evidence-based research in psychology; c. Implement the psychological investigation in students' work places, or real-life settings, as assigned by the Department; d. interpret the findings generated through the scientific inquiry process; e. Discuss the findings with reference to psychological theories and their applications; f. Evaluate the research, examine limitations and identify strengths; and g. Write up a report on the research process and make recommendations, if necessary.
<p>Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus (Note 2)</p>	<p>Each student will be assigned to a Thesis Supervisor. The student is expected to go through the following tasks to complete the Thesis requirement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formulating research questions 2. Developing research instruments and conducting data collection 3. Managing and analyzing data 4. Identifying implications of findings 5. Evaluating limitations of the study 6. Writing up the Thesis <p>The Thesis should be focused on an empirical-based investigation of a psychological problem of applied nature. Students are expected to formulate their own research questions with relevance to their academic interest or practical psychological problems. They are to test out and write up those research questions independently or at least with minimal assistance up to the implementation stage. The Thesis will enable students to assess and evaluate empirical evidence in the format of quantitative data and/or qualitative analyses. It may consist of an investigation of a psychological phenomenon in a student's work place, or a real-life setting, as assigned by the Department.</p> <p>The funded research projects held by faculty members of the Psychology team in the areas of applied health, social welfare, education, rehabilitation sciences, will also be used as a significant source of investigation for the students' consideration.</p>

	<p>Many of these projects belong to policy priority areas or have direct relevance to recent government policy reforms. Students will be introduced to these projects at regular research seminars conducted throughout the last two semesters.</p>																																																		
<p>Teaching/Learning Methodology (Note 3)</p>	<p>The final-year Thesis is an integrative subject, arranged in the last two semesters of the study. Students are expected to spend at least 12 weeks in the two semesters, and work independently on a selected topic/theme of Applied Psychology. The following learning and teaching activities are designed to help cultivate students' critical thinking, develop creative ideas and produce a scholarly Thesis:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6-hour Integrative Seminar: To help integrate what they have learnt, each student is required to attend an integrative seminar which serves the purpose of enabling students to integrate applied psychology knowledge to empirically-based research; the integrative seminar will be provided in a blended learning environment to hone students' research skills with online resources including referencing software, online statistical tools, & online thesis writing resources. 24-hour Student-Thesis Supervisor Consultation: A teacher acting as a Thesis Supervisor will be assigned by the Department of APSS to each student for consultation and monitoring of work to achieve the aim of completing the Thesis. Students are expected to spend at least 24 hours in consultation with his/her Thesis Supervisor whose main roles are to guide research methodology, procedures and interpretations, give critical and constructive comments, and to evaluate the completed Thesis. Upon endorsement of the research proposal, students will commence collecting and analyzing data on their chosen topic of study with advice and guidance from the Thesis supervisor. 12-week Applied Research Activities: It is estimated that students use about 12 weeks on psychological investigation of a chosen topic of interest in applied psychology in their work places, or real-life settings, as assigned by the Department. Students are generally expected to review relevant psychological literature, plan the research design and conduct data collection independently, collate and analyze the findings for academic discussion, evaluate and write up an empirically-based Thesis. 																																																		
<p>Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes (Note 4)</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="368 1485 770 1653" rowspan="2">Specific assessment methods/tasks</th> <th data-bbox="770 1485 927 1653" rowspan="2">% weight ing</th> <th colspan="7" data-bbox="927 1485 1469 1585">Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)</th> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="927 1585 999 1653">a</th> <th data-bbox="999 1585 1070 1653">b</th> <th data-bbox="1070 1585 1142 1653">c</th> <th data-bbox="1142 1585 1214 1653">d</th> <th data-bbox="1214 1585 1286 1653">e</th> <th data-bbox="1286 1585 1358 1653">f</th> <th data-bbox="1358 1585 1469 1653">g</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="368 1653 770 1787">1.Competence in conducting a piece of empirical research</td> <td data-bbox="770 1653 927 1787">20</td> <td data-bbox="927 1653 999 1787">√</td> <td data-bbox="999 1653 1070 1787">√</td> <td data-bbox="1070 1653 1142 1787">√</td> <td data-bbox="1142 1653 1214 1787"></td> <td data-bbox="1214 1653 1286 1787"></td> <td data-bbox="1286 1653 1358 1787"></td> <td data-bbox="1358 1653 1469 1787"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="368 1787 770 1921">2.Conceptualization of problem and quality of literature review</td> <td data-bbox="770 1787 927 1921">30</td> <td data-bbox="927 1787 999 1921">√</td> <td data-bbox="999 1787 1070 1921">√</td> <td data-bbox="1070 1787 1142 1921"></td> <td data-bbox="1142 1787 1214 1921">√</td> <td data-bbox="1214 1787 1286 1921">√</td> <td data-bbox="1286 1787 1358 1921"></td> <td data-bbox="1358 1787 1469 1921"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="368 1921 770 2049">3.Interpretation of findings and generation of knowledge and theory</td> <td data-bbox="770 1921 927 2049">30</td> <td data-bbox="927 1921 999 2049"></td> <td data-bbox="999 1921 1070 2049"></td> <td data-bbox="1070 1921 1142 2049"></td> <td data-bbox="1142 1921 1214 2049">√</td> <td data-bbox="1214 1921 1286 2049">√</td> <td data-bbox="1286 1921 1358 2049">√</td> <td data-bbox="1358 1921 1469 2049"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>								Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weight ing	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)							a	b	c	d	e	f	g	1.Competence in conducting a piece of empirical research	20	√	√	√					2.Conceptualization of problem and quality of literature review	30	√	√		√	√			3.Interpretation of findings and generation of knowledge and theory	30				√	√	√	
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Total	100 %							

*The grade is calculated according to the percentage assigned.

Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:

The Thesis represents students' efforts in applying and integrating theoretical knowledge and research skills into a selected topic in applied psychology. Students are therefore assessed whether they could demonstrate their academic abilities to generate viable research questions, carry out an empirically-based study of a chosen topic or topics from the research literature, involve a variety of methods of psychological investigation, organize, interpret, utilize and apply research findings derived from applied psychology in work places, and/or real-life situations. They are also evaluated if they could understand the implications of working in and working with the professionals in social sciences domains, unraveling and linking the interrelationships among them for theoretical formulation and applied research investigations.

Both the students and the Thesis Supervisors will be provided with a set of 13 quality criteria in the preparation and continuous assessment of the submitted Thesis, as follows:

Quality Criteria	
1.	The Thesis content is elaborative and relevant.
2.	The Thesis is clearly organized with heading and sub-headings .
3.	The language is accurate, concise and academic.
4.	The Abstract highlights the main research questions, findings (including new findings if any), conclusion, and recommendations (if any).
5.	The Introduction contains relevant background information and shows the research aim(s), scope and potential significance of the study.
6.	The Literature review provides evidence of sufficient coverage of the knowledge base of the chosen topic of investigation drawing reference from academic journals.
7.	The Thesis reports the research methodology, the findings, discussion of the findings, limitations of the study and conclusion , and may include recommendations.
8.	The Thesis highlights the analyses and / or implications relevant to the topic.
9.	The figures or tables are labelled and the data have been described and interpreted.
10.	The Thesis can reflect use of theoretical knowledge and concepts of Applied Psychology, personal experience and ability to integrate knowledge from different sources.
11.	The Thesis can exhibit students' creative and/or original ideas.
12.	The Thesis can demonstrate students' critical/ independent thinking .
13.	Sources are properly cited and a list of references is included, according to the latest APA Publication Manual

Student Study Effort Required	Class contact:	
	▪ Lecture / Seminar	6 Hrs.
	▪ Student-Thesis Supervisor Consultation	24 Hrs.
	Other student study effort:	
	▪ Applied Research Activities (at least for 12 weeks)	180 Hrs.
	Total student study effort	210 Hrs.
Medium of Instruction	English	
Medium of Assessment	English	
Reading List and References	<p><u>Recommended Textbooks</u></p> <p>Sternberg, R.J. & Sternberg, K. (2010). <i>Psychologist's companion: A guide to scientific reading for students and researchers.</i>(5th Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Kuther, T. L. (2011). <i>The Psychology Major's Handbook</i> (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.</p> <p><u>References</u></p> <p>Antonius, R. (2003). <i>Interpreting quantitative data with SPSS</i>. London: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Banyard, P., & Grayson, A. (Eds). (2000). <i>Introducing psychological research: Sixty studies that shape psychology</i>. Basingstoke: Palgrave.</p> <p>Bergman, M.M. (Ed.). (2008). <i>Advances in mixed methods research: Theories and applications</i>. London: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Bryman, A. & Cramer, D. (2011). <i>Quantitative data analysis with SPSS 17, 18 and 19: A guide for social scientists</i>. London: Psychology Press.</p> <p>Collier, J. (2010). <i>Using SPSS syntax: A beginner's guide</i>. London: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Conrad, C., & Serlin, R.C. (Eds.). (2011). <i>The Sage handbook of research in education: Pursuing ideas as keystone of exemplary inquiry</i>. London: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2005). <i>The SAGE handbook of qualitative research</i>. (3rd Ed.). London: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Fielding, J., & Gilbert, N. (2006). <i>Understanding social statistics</i>. (2nd Ed.). London: Sage Publications.</p>	

- Fink, A. (2005). *Evaluation Fundamentals: Insights into the outcomes, effectiveness, and quality of health programs*. (2nd Ed.). London: Sage Publications.
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- Herr, K., & Anderson, G.L. (2005). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hobbs, D., & Wright, R. (2006). *The Sage handbook of fieldwork*. London: Sage Publications.
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- O’Leary, Z. (2005). *Researching real-world problems: A guide to methods of inquiry*. London: Sage Publications.
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (eds.). (2008). *The Sage handbook of action research: participative inquiry and practice*. 2nd Ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Roberts-Holmes, G. (2006). *Doing your early years research project; A step-by-step Guide*. London: Paul Chapman publications.
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- Schutt, R.K. (2006). *Investigating the social world*. (5th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif: Pine Forge Press Publications.
- Shaw, I., Green, J.C., & Mark, M.M. (eds.). (2006). *The Sage handbook of evaluation*. London: Sage Publication.
- Silverman, D. (2010). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. (3rd Ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Stanovich, K. E. (2010). *How to think straight about psychology* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Thomas, G. (2009). *How to do your research project: A guide to students of education and applied social science*. London: Sage.
- Wood, S.E., & Greenwood, E.R. (2011). *The world of psychology*. Boston, MA: Ally & Bacon.

Recommended Academic Journals

Selected articles and special series in scholarly journals relevant to specific topics of applied psychology research chosen for students’ theses.

Megasite Research Links

<http://www.oklahoma.net/~jnichols/research.html>

This is a resourceful website for students to participate in psychological research online. There are links to specific studies, to lots of research opportunities, and to research databases.

APA Science Information for Students

<http://www.apa.org/science/infostu.html>

This is a great site for learning what scientific opportunities are available to psychology students.