

City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus

offered by the Department of English
with effect from Semester A in 2022 / 2023

Part I Course Overview

Course Title:	Dissertation
Course Code:	EN6941
Course Duration:	The normal duration is 1 semester (Semester B) and the maximum is two semesters (Semester B and Summer Term). This is a dissertation-type course with supervision only.
Credit Units:	6
Level:	P6
Proposed Area: <i>(for GE courses only)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Humanities <input type="checkbox"/> Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations <input type="checkbox"/> Science and Technology
Medium of Instruction:	English
Medium of Assessment:	English
Prerequisites: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	EN6471 Research Methods in English Studies ¹ or EN6508 Critical Approaches to Literature ²³
Precursors: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil
Equivalent Courses: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil
Exclusive Courses: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	EN6943 Capstone Project

¹ For students planning to study a TESL/Applied Linguistics topic. See also requirements about choice of research topics in Part 2: Paragraph 4 Assessment Tasks and Activities.

² For students planning to study on a literary research topic. See also requirements about choice of research topics

³ Students need to have gained at least 12 credit units in the programme before being allowed to enrol in the course.

Part II Course Details

1. Abstract

(A 150-word description about the course)

This course aims to develop academic skills and expertise to carry out independent research in a chosen area of language studies through the application of theory and techniques provided in the programme.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs [#]	Weighting* (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	design, conduct, manage and report (on) a substantial piece of individual research and development work	25%	✓	✓	✓
2.	search, select and critically evaluate literature and other materials relevant to the chosen area	25%	✓	✓	✓
3.	apply suitable research methods and sound scholarly principles to investigate the chosen topic	25%	✓	✓	✓
4.	communicate the results of the research effectively in a logical, precise and coherent manner in the form of a dissertation	25%	✓	✓	✓
		100%			

* If weighting is assigned to CILOs, they should add up to 100%.

[#] Please specify the alignment of CILOs to the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning outcomes (PILOs) in Section A of Annex.

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.				Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	
Consultation	The student works with a designated supervisor. The student, through independent study, writes the literature review, collects & analyses data, and then writes up the dissertation. The length should be 10,000 to 15,000 words, not including references or appendices.	✓	✓	✓	✓	

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.						Weighting*	Remarks
	1	2	3	4				
Continuous Assessment: <u>100</u> %								
A full research proposal (2,500-4,500 words, excluding references and appendices)	✓	✓	✓	✓			20%	
An interim report of the research project (800-1,200 words, excluding references and appendices.)	✓	✓	✓	✓			25%	
A dissertation reporting an independent research project (10,000- 15,000 words, excluding references and appendices).	✓	✓	✓	✓			55%	
							100%	
* The weightings should add up to 100%.								

The following requirements apply to the choice of research topic:

- a) Students are required to pursue a stream-specific research topic (e.g., a literature topic for students of the LLC stream or a TESL or a discourse analysis topic for the TESL stream). Students on the General Track are allowed to work on a literature or a TESL or an applied linguistics topic.
- b) Students need to have completed a relevant prerequisite before their research topics are approved.

5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

The Research Proposal

Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
Knowledge and analysis of topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All required information is included. Shows an excellent understanding of the topic, key concepts, theory and their application to the proposed study; The key concepts and theory are discussed in depth and critically. The proposed study is well-designed; the method(s) is thoroughly described, grounded in the literature and well-justified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most required information is included; Shows sufficient understanding of the topic, key concepts, theory and their application to the proposed study; The concepts and theory are discussed in some depth and quite critically; The proposed study is quite well-designed; the method(s) is quite thoroughly described and justified in some parts. Some parts of the design are grounded in the literature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some crucial information is missing Shows partial understanding of the topic, some of the key concepts and their application to the proposed study; The discussion of the key concepts and theory needs to be done in greater depth and more critically; A few major parts of the proposed study need to be elaborated, redesigned or justified. There is a need to refer to the literature for some parts of the design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quite a large amount of crucial information is missing Shows inadequate understanding of the topic, the key concepts and their application to the proposed study; The discussion of the concepts and theory lacks depth Many major parts of the proposed study need to be reconsidered or elaborated. There is a general lack of referencing to the existing literature for the design of the study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All required information is missing Shows inaccurate or poor understanding of the topic, the concepts and their application to the proposed study The proposed study is poorly designed and will not be implementable.
Research ethics (applicable to projects involving human participants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives a thorough discussion of research ethics including potential issues involved and proposes sensible solutions to address the issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives a generally clear discussion research ethics including some of the key issues involved and provides somewhat sensible solutions to address the issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives a rather brief discussion of the ethical considerations. Some thorough planning for how to address the ethical issues is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an inadequate discussion of ethical considerations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No ethical considerations are discussed

<p>Organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a clear organizational plan appropriate to a research proposal. • Includes a thorough, focused and concise review of relevant literature; clearly stated and answerable research questions; and detailed but concise statement of methodology and action plan; • All of these sections should be present in an A range proposal. • Ideas are very logically developed in sufficient detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a clear organizational plan appropriate to a research proposal. • Includes all the sections specified for an A range proposal, but there are weaknesses in one or two of the sections. In contrast to a C range proposal, the research questions, methodology and action plan all presented logically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a clear organizational plan appropriate to a report of a research proposal. • Includes all the sections specified for an A/B range proposal, but there are weaknesses in most or all of the sections. In particular, the organization of the research questions, methodology and action plan does not give a clear picture of how the research will be conducted, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a recognizable proposal structure, but the overall organization plan and/or its implementation is not appropriate to a research proposal. • Includes some but not all of the sections specified for an A-C range proposal; or one or more of the sections is present but fails to achieve its purpose (e.g., the literature review does not review relevant literature, the methodology does not describe a research methodology). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks a recognizable structure appropriate to a research proposal. • May include some or all of the sections specified for an A-C range proposal, but most fail to achieve their purpose. • May be significantly below the recommended word limit.
<p>Language and style</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high standard of written English, although occasional errors in grammar or word choice may occur but do not interfere with understanding. • Appropriate use of academic writing conventions. • Ideas are expressed clearly and effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good standard of written English, although some errors in grammar or word choice are in evidence but do not interfere with understanding. • Appropriate use of academic writing conventions. • Ideas are clearly and somewhat effectively expressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reasonable standard of written English with somewhat frequent errors in grammar or word choice are evident that sometimes affect the intelligibility at some points. • Adequate use of academic writing conventions. • Ideas are somewhat effectively expressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A low standard of written English. Very frequent errors in grammar or word choice make parts of the proposal rather difficult to understand. • Academic writing conventions are not followed correctly or consistently. • Requires substantial revisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standard of English in the proposal overall or in a major part of it is so low that the research is obscured and uninterpretable. • A poor mastery of the academic conventions.

<p>Citations and references</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 20 sources are cited; • All sources are relevant; • Source ideas are very well-integrated and contribute to the development of the arguments in various sections. • The APA citation style (or a recognized one) is accurately applied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-19 sources are cited; • Most sources are relevant; • Most source ideas are well-integrated and contribute quite effectively to the development of some of the arguments. • The APA citation style (or a recognized one) is quite properly applied with some minor problems observed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-14 sources are cited; • Some of the sources are not relevant; • Some of the source ideas cited disrupt the flow of discussions in some parts of the writing. • The APA citation style (or a recognized one) is only adequately applied with some major problems observed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-9 sources are cited; • Most of the sources are not immediately relevant; • Source ideas are poorly integrated cause major disruption to the flow of discussions in most parts of writing. • The APA citation style (or a recognized one) is inadequately applied. Major revisions are needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-4 sources are cited • The sources are not relevant at all. • Source ideas cited are not relevant at all • Demonstrates a lack of understanding of the APA (or a recognizable) citation style.
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The Interim Report

Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
Action plan for allocated tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very clearly and succinctly described • Achievable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quite clearly and succinctly described • Quite achievable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately described need some clarification • Fairly achievable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequately described • Not quite achievable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not clear at all • Not achievable at all
Execution, progress and outcomes of the tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly reported & well-implemented • Excellent outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quite clearly reported and quite properly implemented • Some good outcomes obtained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly clearly reported • Adequately implemented • Satisfactory outcomes obtained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear description (details missing) • Inadequately implemented • Inadequate outcomes obtained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme unclear • Very poorly implemented • No/poor outcomes obtained
Issues/challenges Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-articulated • Very appropriately addressed • Critical and meaningful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quite clearly articulated • Quite appropriately addressed • Quite critical and quite meaningful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly clearly articulated • Adequately addressed • Not critical enough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear description • Inadequately addressed • Not critical at all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mention of issues • Issues poorly addressed • No reflection
Remaining work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accomplishable • Very sensible • Well-thought out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quite accomplishable • Some minor adjustments needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly accomplishable • Need a few major adjustments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not quite accomplishable • Need major adjustments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not accomplishable
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very organized • Effectively sectioned • Ideas are well-connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quite organized • Quite effectively sectioned • Ideas are quite well-connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately organized • Adequately sectioned • Some obvious problems with coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly organized • Poorly sectioned • Major problems with coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very poorly organized • No sectioning at all • Ideas do not cohere at all.
Language and style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high standard of written English, although occasional errors in grammar or word choice may occur but do not interfere with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good standard of written English, although some errors in grammar or word choice are in evidence but do not interfere with understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reasonable standard of written English with somewhat frequent errors in grammar or word choice are evident that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A low standard of written English. Very frequent errors in grammar or word choice make parts of the proposal rather difficult to understand. • Academic writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standard of English in the proposal overall or in a major part of it is so low that the research is obscured and uninterpretable. • A poor mastery of the

	<p>understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of academic writing conventions. • Ideas are expressed clearly and effectively • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of academic writing conventions. • Ideas are clearly and somewhat effectively expressed. 	<p>sometimes affect the intelligibility at some points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate use of academic writing conventions. • Ideas are somewhat effectively expressed. 	<p>conventions are not followed correctly or consistently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires substantial revisions. 	<p>academic conventions.</p>
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The Dissertation

	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
Quality of the research	<p>An excellent piece of original research, with (a) an in-depth and critical engagement with the literature on the topic, (b) a clear fit between literature review, research questions, methodology, and the research outcomes, and (c) a clearly identified and potentially significant contribution to knowledge in its topic area.</p> <p>Shows a sophisticated understanding of theoretical and methodological frameworks and their application in research.</p>	<p>A good piece of research, with (b) a critical with the literature on the topic, (b) clear fit between literature review, research questions, methodology, and the research outcomes, and (c) clearly identified findings, which make a contribution to knowledge.</p> <p>Shows a good understanding of theoretical and methodological frameworks and their application in research.</p>	<p>An adequate piece of research with (a) a fair engagement of the literature on the topic, (b) a reasonable fit between literature review, research questions, methodology, and the research outcomes (although some flaws may be evident), and (c) clearly identified findings which make a limited contribution to knowledge.</p> <p>Shows a basic understanding of theoretical and methodological frameworks and their application in research.</p>	<p>A barely adequate piece of research, in which there is evidence of an attempt to investigate a problem.</p> <p>The work displays a poor engagement with the literature on the topic and is flawed in the research design or application of research procedures. The research outcomes or conclusions are reasonable.</p> <p>Shows limited or minimal understanding of theoretical and methodological frameworks and their application in research.</p>	<p>An inadequate piece of research, in which there may be evidence of an attempt to address a problem.</p> <p>The work displays no engagement with the literature and serious flaws in research design and/or methodologies.</p> <p>The findings or conclusions, if present, do not relate well to the writer's own research.</p> <p>Shows little or no understanding of theoretical and methodological frameworks and their application in research.</p>
Ethical review of research	Applicable (if the project involved human participants and sensitive data) & approved			Applicable but not approved or no approval sought	

	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
Organisation of the dissertation	<p>Has a clear organizational plan appropriate to a report of an original piece of research.</p> <p>Includes a thorough, focused and concise review of relevant literature; clearly stated and answerable research questions; and detailed but concise statement of methodology; logically presented research outcomes in a format appropriate to the research methodology; and a discussion and/or conclusion drawing out the significance of the research. All of these sections should be present in an A range dissertation.</p> <p>A list of references is included, which covers the most relevant titles to the research, and the APA (or similar) referencing and citation format is followed with care.</p>	<p>Has a clear organizational plan appropriate to a report of an original piece of research.</p> <p>Includes all the sections specified for an A range dissertation, but there are weaknesses in one or two of the sections. In contrast to a C range dissertation, the research questions, methodology and research outcomes are reported logically and in detail.</p> <p>A list of references is included, which covers the most relevant titles to the research. APA (or similar) referencing and citation format is followed with care, although occasional inconsistencies and errors are present.</p>	<p>Has a clear organizational plan appropriate to a report of an original piece of research.</p> <p>Includes all the sections specified for an A/B range dissertation, but there are weaknesses in most or all of the sections. In particular, the organization of the research questions, methodology and research outcomes is such that the dissertation does not give a clear picture of how the research was conducted or how its findings were arrived at.</p> <p>A list of references is included, which may be brief, off-topic or contain significant omissions, or inconsistencies between in-text references and reference list.</p> <p>An attempt is made to apply APA (or similar) referencing and citation format, but there are some inconsistencies and errors.</p>	<p>Has a recognizable dissertation structure, but the overall organization plan and/or its implementation is not appropriate to a report of an original piece of research.</p> <p>Includes some but not all of the sections specified for an A-C range dissertation; or one or more of the sections is present but fails to achieve its purpose (e.g., the literature review does not review relevant literature, the methodology does not describe a research methodology).</p> <p>The list of references is inadequate for the purposes of the dissertation in that significant sources are missing and/or mis-referenced.</p> <p>An attempt is made to apply APA (or similar) referencing and citation format, but there are frequent inconsistencies and errors.</p>	<p>Lacks a recognizable dissertation structure, appropriate to a report of an original piece of research.</p> <p>May include some or all of the sections specified for an A-C range dissertation, but most fail to achieve their purpose. May be significantly below the recommended word limit.</p> <p>The list of references is inadequate for the purposes of the dissertation. APA (or similar) referencing and citation format are applied inconsistently or not at all.</p>

	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
Language and style	<p>A high standard of written English, although occasional errors in grammar or word choice may occur but do not interfere with understanding.</p> <p>Appropriate use of academic writing conventions. Technical terms are used accurately and clearly defined or explained. Ideas are expressed accurately and with appropriate use of modality, tense, and specification (articles or other determiners). Generally, free of errors that would be picked up by a careful proof-reader.</p>	<p>A good standard of written English, although some errors in grammar or word choice are in evidence but do not interfere with understanding.</p> <p>Appropriate use of academic writing conventions. Technical terms are used with reasonable accuracy and are adequately defined or explained. Ideas are largely expressed accurately and with appropriate use of modality and tense. Free of serious errors.</p>	<p>A reasonable standard of written English, although frequent errors in grammar or word choice are evident. Errors sometimes affect the intelligibility at some points.</p> <p>There may be uneven use of academic writing conventions. Technical terms may sometimes not always be used accurately, and may sometimes not be adequately defined or explained. Ideas are sometimes expressed accurately and with appropriate use of modality and tense, but errors sometimes affect clear expression of meaning.</p> <p>Contains a considerable number of errors that would be picked up by a careful proof-reader. Some of which are more than minor mechanical errors.</p>	<p>A low standard of written English. Frequent errors in grammar or word choice make parts of the dissertation difficult to understand.</p> <p>Academic writing conventions are not followed correctly or consistently. Technical terms are used inaccurately, and are often inadequately defined or explained. Ideas are expressed inaccurately and without appropriate use of modality and tense.</p> <p>Errors often affect clear expression of meaning. Improvement would require substantial rewriting, rather than proofreading alone.</p>	<p>The grammar, word choice, use of academic writing convention, technical terms, modality and tense make the dissertation largely unintelligible.</p> <p>The standard of English in the dissertation overall or in a major part of it is so low that the research is obscured and uninterpretable.</p>

Part III Other Information (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

1. Keyword Syllabus

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

Independent work, student-directed topic, individual research, consultations with supervisor

2. Reading List

2.1 Compulsory Readings

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1.	Bitchener, J. (2010). Writing an applied linguistics thesis or dissertation: A guide to presenting empirical research. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
2.	Barry, P. (1995). Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory. Manchester: Manchester UP.
3.	Cooley, L. & Lewkowicz, J. (2003). Dissertation writing in practice: Turning ideas into text. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
4.	Costello, P. J. M. (2011). Effective action research: Developing reflective thinking and practice. New York: Continuum International Pub.
5.	Ridley, D. (2012). The literature review: A step-by-step guide for students (2nd ed.). London: Sage
6.	Simon Eliot and W.R. Owens (ed). (1998). A Handbook to Literary Research. New York: Routledge, The Open University.
7.	Strunk, W. Jr., & White, E. B. (1972). The Elements of Style. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
8.	Fabb, N. & Durant, A. (2014). <i>How to Write Essays and Dissertations: A Guide for English Literature Students</i> . (2nd ed.) New York, NY: Routledge.

2.2 Additional Readings

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

Generic research methods

1.	Andrews, R. (2003). Research questions. New York, NY: Continuum.
2.	Bamberg, M., & Andrews, M. (2004). Considering counter narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense. Philadelphia : J. Benjamins.
3.	Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass.
4.	Klein, S.R. (ed.) (2012). Action research methods: Plain and simple. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
5.	Creswell, J. W. (2012). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research. Boston: Pearson.
6.	Creswell, J. W. (2013). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
7.	Hyland, K., & Paltridge, B. (eds.) (2011). Continuum companion to discourse analysis. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
8.	Johnson, R., Chambers, D, Raghuram, P., Tincknell, E. (2004). The practice of cultural studies. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.