

**REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
(MSocSc)**

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

These regulations apply to candidates admitted to the Master of Social Sciences 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.

The degree of Master of Social Sciences (MSocSc) is a postgraduate degree awarded for the satisfactory completion of a prescribed course of study in one of the following fields: Applied Psychology, Behavioral Health; Clinical Psychology; Counselling; Criminology; Educational Psychology; Gerontology; Media, Culture and Creative Cities; Mental Health; Nonprofit Management; Population and Policy Analysis; Psychology; Social Data Analytics; Social Service Management; Sociology; and Sustainability Leadership and Governance. These fields of study will not necessarily be offered every year.

Admission requirements

MSS 1. To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences, candidates

- (a) shall comply with the General Regulations and the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
- (b) shall hold
 - (i) a Bachelor's degree of this University; or
 - (ii) another qualification of equivalent standard from this University or from 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);
- (d) shall satisfy any other admission requirements which may be specified for individual fields of study in the regulations below; and
- (e) shall satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination if required.

MSS 1.1 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the fields of Behavioral Health, Counselling, Gerontology, Mental Health, and Social Service Management, candidates shall preferably have had a minimum of two years of post-qualification experience in the relevant fields, in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.2 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Clinical Psychology, candidates

- (a) shall hold a Bachelor's degree with a major in Psychology, or a recognized equivalent qualification;
- (b) shall have demonstrated empirical research experience in the form of a dissertation completed in the Bachelor's degree programme or another equivalent programme in psychology, or first-authorship in published journal article;
- (c) shall be eligible for the Graduate Membership of the Hong Kong Psychological Society; and
- (d) shall preferably have relevant working experience, in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.3 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Criminology, candidates

- (a) shall hold a Bachelor's degree preferably with a major in the social sciences or humanities discipline; or
- (b) shall preferably have working experience in the criminal justice system, social welfare agencies, or in other work with offenders,

in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.4 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Educational Psychology, candidates

- (a) shall hold a Bachelor's degree with a major in Psychology, or a recognized equivalent qualification;
- (b) shall be eligible for the Graduate Membership of the Hong Kong Psychological Society; and
- (c) shall preferably have relevant working experience in educational or related settings,

in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.5 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Nonprofit Management, candidates shall preferably have three years of relevant working experience, in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.6 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Psychology, candidates

- (a) shall preferably have more than one year of work experience; and
- (b) shall satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination and interview if shortlisted,

in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.7 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Social Data Analytics, candidates

- (a) shall preferably have a Bachelor's degree in one of the fields of social sciences: Anthropology, Cognitive Science, Communication, Economics, Education Studies, Ethnic Studies, Linguistics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Urban Studies and Planning, or a closely related field; or a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics, Computer Science, or a related field with an additional major/minor or substantial advanced coursework in one or more social sciences domains; and
- (b) shall preferably have pre-existing training in statistics and/or formal logic or prior experience with one or more technical domains, including programming, statistics, formal logic, calculus, linear algebra, etc.

in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.8 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Population and Policy Analysis, candidates

- (a) shall preferably have a Bachelor's degree in one of the fields of social sciences: Anthropology, Cognitive Science, Communication, Economics, Education Studies, Ethnic Studies, Linguistics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Urban Studies and Planning, or a closely related field; and
- (b) shall preferably have prior experience with applied statistics, mathematics, programming, and/or one or more technical domains (e.g. demographic methods); and
- (c) with a background in statistics, mathematics, computer science, or a related field may be considered if they have a minor or have completed substantial advanced coursework in one or more social sciences domains before admission; or if they commit to pursuing additional domain-specific study upon admission

in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.9 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Sociology, candidates shall hold a Bachelor's degree preferably with a major in the social sciences or humanities discipline, in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

MSS 1.10 To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Applied Psychology, candidates shall hold a Bachelor's degree with a major in Psychology, or a recognized equivalent qualification, in addition to the requirements set out in Regulation MSS 1.

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

Qualifying examination

MSS 3.

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

MSS 4. To be eligible for the award of the degree of Master of Social Sciences, candidates

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

MSS 5. The curriculum shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study; or two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or three academic years of part-time study, unless otherwise specified for individual fields of study in the regulations below.

MSS 5.1 In the field of Clinical Psychology, the programme shall normally extend over two academic years of full-time study, with a maximum period of registration of four academic years of full-time study.

MSS 5.2 In the field of Counselling, the programme shall normally extend over two or three academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of three academic years for the two-year part-time study or four academic years for the three-year part-time study.

MSS 5.3 In the field of Criminology, the programme shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or four academic years of part-time study.

MSS 5.4 In the field of Educational Psychology, the programme shall normally extend over two academic years of full-time study or three academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of four academic years for both full-time and part-time study.

MSS 5.5 In the fields of Media, Culture and Creative Cities, the programme shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or four academic years of part-time study.

MSS 5.6 In the field of Nonprofit Management, the programme shall normally extend over one academic year (three semesters) of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or three academic years of part-time study.

MSS 5.7 In the fields of Mental Health and Social Service Management, the programme shall normally extend over two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of three academic years of part-time study.

MSS 5.8 In the fields of Population and Policy Analysis and Applied Psychology, the programme shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study.

MSS 5.9 In the field of Sociology, the programme shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or three academic years of part-time study.

MSS 6. Candidates shall not be permitted to extend their studies beyond the maximum period of registration specified in the above regulations, unless otherwise permitted or required by the Board of the Faculty.

Advanced Standing

MSS 7. Advanced Standing may be granted to candidates in recognition of studies completed successfully before admission to the curriculum. Candidates who are awarded Advanced Standing will not be granted any further credit transfer for those studies for which Advanced Standing has been granted. The amount of credits to be granted for Advanced Standing shall be determined by the Board of the Faculty, in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) a candidate may be granted a total of not more than 20% of the total credits normally required under a curriculum for Advanced Standing unless otherwise approved by the Senate; and
- (b) credits granted for Advanced Standing shall not normally be included in the calculation of the GPA unless permitted by the Board of the Faculty but will be recorded on the transcript of the candidate.

Exemption

MSS 8. Candidates may be exempted, with or without special conditions attached, from the requirement prescribed in the regulations and syllabuses governing the curriculum with the approval of the Board of the Faculty, except in the case of a capstone experience. Approval for exemption of a capstone experience may be granted only by the Senate with good reasons. Candidates who are so exempted must replace the number of exempted credits with courses of the same credit value.

Progression in curriculum

MSS 9. Candidates may, with the approval of the Board of the Faculty, transfer credits for courses completed at other institutions during their candidature. The number of transferred credits may be recorded in the transcript of the candidate, but the results of courses completed at other institutions shall not be included in the calculation of the GPA. The combined total number of credits to be granted for Advanced Standing and credit transfer shall not exceed half of the total credits normally required under the curricula of the candidates during their candidature at the University.

Completion of curriculum

MSS 10. To complete the curriculum, candidates

- (a) shall satisfy the requirements prescribed in TPG 6 of the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
 - (b) shall follow courses of instruction and complete satisfactorily all prescribed written work and field work;
 - (c) shall complete and present a satisfactory dissertation or capstone project as prescribed in the syllabuses; and
 - (d) shall satisfy the examiners in all prescribed courses and in any prescribed form of examination.
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Dissertation and Capstone project

MSS 11. Subject to the provisions of Regulation MSS 10(c), the title of the dissertation or capstone project shall be submitted for approval by not later than March 31 of the final academic year in which the teaching programme ends and the dissertation or capstone project shall be presented by a date as prescribed in the syllabuses for each field of study; candidates shall submit a statement that the dissertation or capstone project represents their own work (or in the case of conjoint work, a statement countersigned by their co-worker(s), which show their share of the work) undertaken after registration as candidates for the degree.

Assessment

MSS 12. 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.

MSS 13.

- (a) Where so prescribed in the syllabuses, coursework or a dissertation or a capstone project shall constitute part or whole of the examination for one or more courses.
- (b) An assessment of the candidates' coursework during their studies, including completion of written assignments and participation in field work or laboratory work, as the case may be, may be taken into account in determining the candidates' result in each written examination paper; or, where so prescribed in the syllabuses, may constitute the examination of one or more courses.

MSS 14. Candidates shall not be permitted to repeat a course for which they have received a passing grade for the purpose of upgrading.

MSS 15. Candidates who have failed to satisfy the examiners at their first attempt in not more than half of the number of courses to be examined, whether by means of written examination papers or coursework assessment, during any of the academic years of study, 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; 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.

MSS 16. Subject to the provision of Regulation MSS 10(c), candidates who have failed to present a satisfactory dissertation or capstone project may be permitted to submit a new or revised dissertation or capstone project within a specified period.

MSS 17. Candidates who have failed to satisfy the examiners in any prescribed field work/practical work/internship may be permitted to present themselves for re-examination in field work/practical work/internship within a specified period.

MSS 18. 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 at a supplementary examination of the same course to be held before the beginning of the following academic year. 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. Any supplementary examination shall be part of that academic year's examinations, and the provision made in the regulations for failure at the first attempt shall apply accordingly.

MSS 19. There shall be no appeal against the results of examinations and all other forms of assessment.

MSS 20. Candidates who

- (a) 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 under Regulation MSS 15; or
- (b) have failed to satisfy the examiners in any course(s) at a second attempt; or
- (c) are not permitted to submit a new or revised dissertation or capstone project under Regulation MSS 16; or
- (d) have failed to submit a satisfactory new or revised dissertation or capstone project under Regulation MSS 16; or
- (e) have exceeded the maximum period of registration.

may be required to discontinue their studies.

MSS 20.1 In the field of Clinical Psychology, candidates who have failed two external placements or the second attempt of either the external placement or internal practicum may be required to discontinue their studies.

MSS 20.2 In the field of Educational Psychology, candidates who have failed any two practicum courses may be required to discontinue their studies.

Grading systems

MSS 21. Individual courses shall be graded according to the one of the following grading systems:

(a) Letter grades, their standards and the grade points for assessment as follows:

<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

or

(b) 'Pass' or 'Fail'.

Courses graded according to (b) above shall not be included in the calculation of the GPA.

Classification of awards

MSS 22. 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 SOCIAL SCIENCES

APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

The Department of Psychology offers a postgraduate programme leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Applied Psychology. The mission of this programme is to cultivate graduates with foundational knowledge and skills in psychological interventions for addressing complex cognitive and psychological health challenges. The programme will place strong emphasis on deepening students' understanding of psychological phenomena and principles through applied learning experience, the practical application of knowledge and skills in real-world contexts, and engagement with contemporary psychological scholarship. The programme provides a capstone experience for every student to better equip our graduates with a strong foundation in applied psychological science, critical thinking, and evidence-informed practice skills that are highly transferable across sectors.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum of the Master of Social Sciences in the field of Applied Psychology consists of a total of 60 credits. Candidates are required to complete six compulsory courses, three elective courses and one capstone experience course as listed below:

Compulsory Courses

Candidates shall complete all of the following six courses:

- PSYC7101. Introduction to concepts and approaches of psychological practice (6 credits)
- PSYC7102. Evidence-based psychotherapeutic practice (6 credits)
- PSYC7103. Psychological assessment (6 credits)
- PSYC7104. Introduction to psychological research (6 credits)
- PSYC7313. Introduction to health psychology and wellbeing (6 credits)
- PSYC7314. Professional ethics and issues in psychology (6 credits)

Elective Courses

Candidates shall complete three of the following courses:

- PSYC7106. Ageing and neurodegeneration (6 credits)
- PSYC7107. Forensic psychology (6 credits)
- PSYC7108. Special topics in applied psychology (6 credits)
- PSYC7109. Experiential learning (6 credits)
- PSYC7305. Developmental psychology (6 credits)
- PSYC7318. Introduction to educational psychology (6 credits)

(Note: Not all the elective courses listed will necessarily be offered every year)

Capstone Experience Course

Candidates shall complete the following capstone experience course:

- PSYC7120. Capstone project (6 credits)

For the compulsory and elective psychology courses, candidates are required to complete the assigned readings and are encouraged to engage in self-directed learning by reading additional self-selected relevant materials.

Candidates who are enrolled in a capstone experience course are required to conduct a capstone project on an approved topic under the supervision of an academic member in his/her final year of study. The capstone project report shall be presented not later than the last teaching day of the final academic year of study.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Compulsory Courses

PSYC7101. Introduction to concepts and approaches of psychological practice (6 credits)

This course provides an overview of key concepts, frameworks, and professional roles in psychological practice. Students will be introduced to foundational ideas across therapeutic approaches, psychological assessment, and ethical standards. Emphasis is placed on understanding how theory connects to practice and the diverse contexts in which psychologists work. This course prepares students for deeper exploration of therapy, assessment, and ethics in subsequent modules within the programme.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

PSYC7102. Evidence-based psychotherapeutic practice (6 credits)

This course introduces students to the theoretical foundations and practical applications of psychological interventions. The course offers learning in psychological intervention skills that facilitate clients' insight and underpin psychological change.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

PSYC7103. Psychological assessment (6 credits)

This course offers a foundational overview of psychological assessment, introducing students to key concepts, methods, and ethical considerations in the field. Emphasis is placed on understanding the purposes and principles of assessment across cognitive, emotional, and behavioural domains. Students will explore commonly used assessment tools and develop basic skills in test selection, administration, and interpretation. This course serves as a preparatory platform for more specialized training in psychoeducational, cognitive, and personality assessment.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

PSYC7104. Introduction to psychological research (6 credits)

This course adopts a practical approach to teaching the analytical aspects of research techniques in psychology. It is designed to provide students with the basic background in research design and data analysis. The logic of statistical inference and scientific explanation, the merits and limitations of quantitative approaches to the study of psychological phenomena, and research ethics will be discussed.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

PSYC7313. Introduction to health psychology and wellbeing (6 credits)

This course will provide a critical overview of both the psychological and social aspects of human health and wellbeing. Students will gain a foundation for understanding the role of psychology in the health context. Topics covered in this course include health behaviours, coping with health-related stress, social support and health, psychoimmunology, management of chronic illnesses, and patient-practitioner interaction etc.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PSYC7314. Professional ethics and issues in psychology (6 credits)

The purpose of the course is to provide general ethical guidance to cover typical situations encountered by professional psychologists. Models of ethical decision making will be introduced, discussed, and applied. In addition to the Code of Professional Conduct published by local professional bodies (e.g., the Hong Kong Psychological Society), a number of ethical codes, guidelines, and standards of practice will be reviewed.

Assessment: 100% coursework

Elective Courses

PSYC7106. Ageing and neurodegeneration (6 credits)

This course explores the biological, psychological, and clinical aspects of ageing and neurodegenerative disorders. Students will examine the mechanisms of normal and pathological ageing. The course integrates current research on cognitive decline, brain plasticity, and neurobiological changes associated with ageing. Through case studies and critical analysis of contemporary literature, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in promoting healthy ageing.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

PSYC7107. Forensic psychology (6 credits)

This course provides a comprehensive overview of the application of psychological principles for criminal behavioural analysis and risk assessment. Emphasis is placed on understanding the theoretical foundations, empirical research, and ethical considerations that inform forensic psychological work. The course is designed to equip students with foundational knowledge relevant to forensic settings and to foster critical thinking about the role of psychology in legal systems.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

PSYC7108. Special topics in applied psychology (6 credits)

This course explores current and emerging issues, trends, and specialized areas within the field of applied psychology. The course aims to deepen students' understanding of complex challenges faced by psychologists and to foster critical thinking and adaptability in various professional contexts. Emphasis is placed on integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application to prepare students for specialized roles in the field. Individual topics may have special eligibility requirements.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

PSYC7109. Experiential learning (6 credits)

Students will have an experiential learning opportunity to apply psychology knowledge to understand real-life psychological issues and reflect upon this experience. Learning experiences include demonstrations and observations, roleplay, and case discussion. Students are expected to meet with the teacher(s) regularly, reflect upon specific psychological knowledge applied and how they affect various practices and people's lives in society, and write a reflection paper to conclude the learning impact.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PSYC7305. Developmental psychology (6 credits)

This course covers current issues in developmental psychology and their applied implications. Students will actively solve problems and conduct small-scale projects related to selected topics in human development. There will be an emphasis on understanding basic concepts and theories of human development, research methodology and issues in developmental change, as well as biological, environmental and cognitive influences on development.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

PSYC7318. Introduction to educational psychology (6 credits)

This course focuses on how psychological theories are applied to learning, teaching, and the facilitation of human growth. The topics include major developmental theories and their application to learning and instruction; learning theories from both behavioural and cognitive traditions; effective teaching methods and practices; learners' individual and group differences; achievement motivation; and assessment. Students will be involved in learning activities that require self-reflection and integration of daily life experiences.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

Capstone Experience Course

PSYC7120. Capstone project (6 credits)

This course comprises an independent research study in an area of applied psychological science. Students will engage in supervised psychological research. They are required to write a review or report on a research project (e.g., a meta-analytic review or a small-scale empirical project). The write-up should be about 4,000 to 5,000 words in length (excluding tables, figures, bibliographies, and appendices).

Assessment: 100% coursework.
