**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 2024-25 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: Behavioral Health; Clinical Psychology; Counselling; Criminology; Educational Psychology; Gerontology; Media, Culture and Creative Cities; Mental Health; Nonprofit Management; Psychology; Social Data Analytics; Social Service Management; 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 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.

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.

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, Social Service Management, and Social Work, 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 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.

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:

Grade	Standard	Grade Point
A+		4.3
A	Excellent	4.0
A-		3.7
B+		3.3
B	Good	3.0
B-		2.7
C+		2.3
C	Satisfactory	2.0
C-		1.7
D+		1.3
D	Pass	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**

SOCIAL SERVICE MANAGEMENT

The Department of Social Work and Social Administration offers a postgraduate programme leading to the degree of Master of Social Sciences in the field of Social Service Management. The programme shall extend over not less than two and not more than three academic years of part-time study, inclusive of intervening vacations.

EXEMPTION

Candidates may be granted exemption of up to three compulsory courses in recognition of studies completed in related areas. Exemption will only be considered in special circumstances and each application for exemption will be considered on its own merit. Candidates with exemption granted are required to take an additional elective course to replace the exempted compulsory course to meet the degree requirements.

ASSESSMENTS

To complete the programme, candidates shall satisfy the examiners in the assessment of courses as prescribed in the programme. Assessments of the courses may be conducted either by course assignments, or by presentation, or written tests, or a combination of both methods. The grading system follows the standard practice in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

CURRICULUM

Candidates are required to complete 60 credits, including 6 compulsory courses (6 credits each), and 4 elective courses (6 credits each) or 2 elective courses (6 credits each) with a dissertation (12 credits). Candidates can take elective courses in other fields of study under the Master of Social Sciences (Behavioral Health, Gerontology, Mental Health, Nonprofit Management) and the Master of Social Work programmes. Special approval from the respective Programme Directors for the courses in the above-mentioned fields of study or programme is needed.

(A) *Compulsory courses*
Candidates shall complete the following courses.
SOWK6139. Theoretical foundation of human service practices (6 credits)
SOWK6156. Financial planning and management for social service organizations (6 credits)
SOWK6217. Current social welfare policy issues (6 credits)
SOWK6289. Organizational analysis and strategic organizational management (6 credits)
SOWK6339. Human resources management and development in social service organizations (6 credits)

(B) *Elective courses*
Candidates shall complete four of the following courses.
SOWK6185. Qualitative research methods (6 credits)
SOWK6263. Quantitative research methods and statistical analysis (6 credits)
SOWK6290. Social innovation and enterprise (6 credits)
SOWK6324. Special topics in social service management I (6 credits)
SOWK6325. Special topics in social service management II (6 credits)
SOWK6340. Marketing strategies and applications for social service organizations (6 credits)
SOWK6341. Fundraising and resources development: Effective strategies and practice (6 credits)
SOWK6342. Corporate governance for the management in social service organization (6 credits)
SOWK6348. Information and communication technology in human service organizations (6 credits)

and any other courses offered under the Master of Social Sciences (Behavioral Health, Gerontology, Mental Health, Nonprofit Management) and the Master of Social Work programmes

(Note: not all elective courses will necessarily be offered in a given year.)

Capstone Experience Courses

(C) *Compulsory course*
Candidates opt for either dissertation or non-dissertation option shall complete the following course.
SOWK6265.   Research methods in human service (6 credits)

(D) *Dissertation (Elective)*
Candidates opt for dissertation option shall complete the following course.
SOWK9004.   Dissertation (12 credits)

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Compulsory Courses

SOWK6139.   Theoretical foundation of human service practices (6 credits)

The knowledge base of human service practice comes from a wide spectrum of social science disciplines including psychology, sociology and political science. This course will provide the philosophical and conceptual basis for analyzing social problems and issues and translating these theoretical constructs into human service practice.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6156.   Financial planning and management for human service organizations (6 credits)

The course introduces and examines concepts and practices critical to good financial planning and management. The objective is to enable students to learn skills and strategies for budgeting. Emphasis will be given to the understanding of the financial activities and reports essential to management, as well as analysis and use of financial information in planning, budgeting and measuring results to promote the organization's mission and goals.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6217.   Current social welfare policy issues (6 credits)

This course provides a framework of analyzing and formulating social policy in the current social, political and economic environment. Current social welfare policy issues including social welfare planning mechanisms, welfare blue print, strategic framework for social welfare, district planning, and other relevant issues will be examined.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6289.   Organizational analysis and strategic organizational management (6 credits)

This course aims at helping managers of human service organizations to be equipped with the knowledge in strategic management to deal with the current challenges arising from the rapidly changing public and social service scene. Topics may include strategic planning, quality management, risk management, change management, business process re-engineering, etc.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6339. Human resources management and development in social service organizations (6 credits)

The course aims to equip students with knowledge and skills in managing and developing human resources in social service organizations, and examining related current issues, and to stimulate applications in local context. Issues related to the human resources management and development including recruitment, selection, performance management, training and development, and succession planning will be covered, and topics on personal efficacy as a leader will also be examined with practical examples. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to master the basic principles of HR management and development and apply them in social service context.
Assessment: 100% coursework

Elective Courses

SOWK6185.   Qualitative research methods (6 credits)

This course is designed for students with an interest in understanding all aspects of social life and social relations especially those who will undertake a dissertation study. Starting with the question what is reality, the course begins with an introduction to different perspectives on approaching reality, followed by an assessment of the general strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research in comparison with other conventions such as quantitative surveys. The lectures will focus on introducing the general process of ethnographic research and the variety of methods for data collection and analysis including ethnography, grounded theory, observation, interviewing, focus groups and narrative analysis, etc. Various cases will be used to demonstrate how qualitative research helps make meaningful policy and social work practice. Seminars will be organized around practical methodological issues with the objective of helping students proceed with their own research projects. Hands-on experience of a range of research techniques will also be provided.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6263.   Quantitative research methods and statistical analysis (6 credits)

This course covers various statistical analyses include single variable, bivariate, and multivariate analyses. Appropriate analyses for different types of data will be discussed and various techniques in scale development including reliability and factor analysis will be introduced. Apart from various multivariate linear modeling and path analysis, non-parametric analyses will also be introduced.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6290.   Social innovation and enterprise (6 credits)

The Hong Kong society and the world at large have unfolded multifarious new social phenomena that pose new challenges to professional social work practice. The social work professional community has to develop new insights in understanding the nature of such problems and challenges, and to accordingly devise timely and appropriate intervention to address these issues. This course aims at introducing the concept of social entrepreneurship and how it creates social change. We will examine the current global development of social entrepreneurship as well as local development and its development in Greater China and South East Asian countries. We will inspire our students to become an active agent in addressing the pressing social issues and making social change.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6324.   Special topics in social service management I (6 credits)

There are emerging new issues and problems as well as challenges in the social service sector that require managers and practitioners to be equipped with updated knowledge and skills in tackling such problems and facing such challenges. This course will bring in the most contemporary issues, problems and challenges, with reference to updated research findings and innovative practices in the field, to enable students to be well prepared for performing their managerial duties in the social service sector.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6325.   Special topics in social service management II (6 credits)

There are emerging new issues and problems as well as challenges in the social service sector that require managers and practitioners to be equipped with updated knowledge and skills in tackling such problems and facing such challenges. This course will bring in the most contemporary issues, problems and challenges, with reference to updated research findings and innovative practices in the field, to enable students to be well prepared for performing their managerial duties in the social service sector.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6340.   Marketing strategies and applications for social service organizations (6 credits)

Social service organisations operate in an environment with various stakeholders, like service users, service purchasers, volunteers, donors, funders, neighbours, policymakers and press, etc., who have different exchange relationships with them. Marketing is about the effective management of an organisation's exchange relationships with its various markets and publics. This course provides students with the theoretical concepts and skills in marketing that are applicable in the social service sector with an emphasis both on using traditional and digital techniques. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to master the basic and latest principles of marketing and apply them in social service context.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6341.   Fundraising and resources development: Effective strategies and practice (6 credits)

Resource is necessary for an NGO to support its means and services in actualizing the mission. Securing funds have become more and more competitive and NGOs have attempted to diversify sources of funding. Raising funds, writing proposals and developing innovative ways to generate resources have become regular activities of NGOs. This course covers topics such as understanding of giving behaviour and the current trend of philanthropy, cost-effectiveness of various fundraising activities, effective strategies including building a prospective relationship, essential elements in a grant proposal and pitching, presentation of results and impacts, accountability and report, handling of ethical issues and risk management etc.
Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6342. Corporate governance for the management in social service organization (6 credits)

There are emerging new issues and problems as well as challenges in the social service sector that require managers and practitioners to be equipped with updated knowledge and skills in tackling such problems and facing such challenges. This course will bring in the most contemporary issues, problems and challenges, with reference to updated research findings and innovative practices in the field, to enable students to be well prepared for performing their managerial duties in the social service sector. This course introduces concepts and system for better understanding and in-depth analysis on practice

of corporate governance of social service organization receiving public funding. It emphasizes, from the management perspective on the leadership of board and senior management/social work professionals for effective service and achievement of mission of the organization. It takes reference to real life cases and issues. It stimulates development of a framework to understand perspectives of different stakeholders and for ongoing application and developing effective intervention.

This course is suitable for candidates who are in position, from frontline team leader to senior supervisor, or aim to become future leaders in social service organization with management responsibility.

Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK6348. Information and communication technology in human service organizations (6 credits)

This course aims to equip students with knowledge and skills in handling and utilizing information and communication technology in managing social service organizations and service delivery. The course content includes: Trends and issues of technological development in society and human services, process of developing and managing IT projects, use of ICT and social media in direct services, Assistive technology and gerontechnology, Security and ethical use of ICT and social media, and Emerging trends and its future use in human services.

Assessment: 100% coursework

Capstone Experience Courses

SOWK6265. Research methods in human service (6 credits)

This course covers the whole research process from the development of research questions and hypotheses to the analysis of data as well as presentation of findings. Different data collection methods including qualitative data collection such as case study, interviews and focus groups; and quantitative data collection such as survey and experiment will be discussed. Data analysis on various types of data including secondary data will be examined. Students will be expected to integrate and apply the knowledge and skills they acquired through the programme by attending the integrated seminars organized by the end of the first semester of the final academic year of study.

Assessment: 100% coursework

SOWK9004. Dissertation (12 credits)

The title of the dissertation shall be submitted for approval not later than five months before the formal submission of the dissertation **or** not later than March 31 of the same academic year of study. The dissertation shall be presented by not later than **August 1** of the same academic year of study. The dissertation shall be a critical study that demonstrates the application of research methodology to the investigation of problems relevant to the field of study, and shall not exceed 20,000 words in length.

Assessment: 100% coursework