

Course Title	:	Policy Research and Evaluation Design
Course Code	:	SOC506
Recommended Study Year	:	Taught Master Year 1
No. of Credits/Term	:	3
Mode of Tuition	:	Lecture-Tutorial
Class Contact Hours	:	3 hours per week
Category in Major Prog.	:	Master of Social Sciences in Comparative Social Policy (International)
Discipline	:	Sociology and Social Policy
Prerequisite(s)	:	N/A
Co-requisite(s)	:	N/A
Exclusion(s)	:	N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	:	N/A

Course Description

This course introduces students to the role of research in evidence-based policy and practice. It gives an overview of the use of research in different stages of the policy process and explains the fundamental elements of a robust research design. Students will learn about the rationale of different research methods and their applications in policy research and evaluation in promoting social change.

Aims

This course aims to equip students with knowledge and skills to apply research methods in policy research and evaluation.

Learning Outcomes (LOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. explain the different stages of the research process and various approaches to social policy and evaluation research
2. formulate research questions and hypothesis for policy and evaluation research
3. appraise different qualitative or quantitative research methods and their appropriateness to particular research questions
4. critically discuss ethical issues involved in the research process
5. develop a research design for a policy research or evaluation

6. communicate and present the research question, design and findings professionally

Indicative Content

1. Introduction

Policy process and research process

2. Research Design

Research question and hypothesis

Conceptualisation and measurement

Population and sampling

Validity and reliability

3. Ethics

Involvement of stakeholders

Empowerment and challenges

4. Research Methods

Quantitative methods

Qualitative methods

Comparative methods

5. Policy Research and Evaluation for Social Change

Needs assessment

Theory of Change

Social impact assessment

Quasi-experimental design

Delphi method

6. Proposing and Reporting Policy and Evaluation Research

Proposal and report writing

Teaching method

Lectures and tutorials in this class will be highly interactive, collaborative and practical. During weekly lectures, policy research and evaluation examples will be used to illustrate the concepts and the techniques of various research methods. In weekly tutorial classes, we will engage in discussions and activities to practice what we learn.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment	100%
<i>Class Participation</i>	10%
<i>Group Fieldwork Project (team work)</i>	25%
<i>Group Presentation of Research (team work)</i>	25%
<i>Individual Research Proposal</i>	40%

Class Participation (10%)

Class participation involves active participation in all class discussions as well as preparing class materials, such as lecture prompts, printed questions for in class discussion, and other materials assigned by a subject teacher.

Group Fieldwork Project (25%)

You will work with a team on a fieldwork project. Your task, with your team, is to choose a policy research or evaluation question of your choice and carry out fieldwork with appropriate method(s) that address the research questions. In your group report of no more than 5000 words in total excluding bibliography and appendix (word length will be adjusted based on your group size), you will cover the rationale of the methods chosen, steps in carrying out the fieldwork, reflection on ethics and challenges encountered as well as preliminary data analysis.

Group Presentation of Research (25%)

With your research partner(s), you will give a group presentation on your group fieldwork project of around 20 minutes and facilitate 10 minutes discussion and Q&A. The presentation should include the background of the policy being evaluated, evaluation questions, evaluation methods, data collection process, and a thorough evaluation of the policy intervention selected with findings and recommendations.

Individual Research Proposal (40%)

For this assignment, you will write a research proposal on a policy research or policy evaluation project of your choice. It should include literature review, research question and methodology and be of no more than 3500 words in length (excluding bibliography and appendix). You need to provide details of the research design with a clear justification of your choice of methods. A draft of your survey questionnaire or interview guide (or any other materials showing preparation for fieldwork), your work schedule (as a table if you like), and any supporting tables and figures should be placed in the appendix of your research proposal.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Learning outcome	Assessment Method			
	Class Participation and Engagement	Questionnaire Project (team work)	Group Presentation of Research (team work)	Individual Research Proposal
1. Explain the different stages of the research process and various approaches to social policy and evaluation research	X	X	X	X
2. Formulate research questions and hypothesis for policy and evaluation research	X	X	X	X
3. Appraise different qualitative or quantitative research methods and their appropriateness to particular research questions	X	X	X	X
4. Critically discuss ethical issues involved in the research process			X	X
5. Develop a research design for a policy research or evaluation			X	X
6. Communicate and present the research question, design and findings professionally				X

Required/Essential Readings

Bryman, A., *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: OUP, 2012.

Babbie, E.R., *The Practice of Social Research*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2012.

Recommended/Supplementary Readings

Becker, S, Bryman, A., and Ferguson, H. *Understanding Research for Social Policy and Social Work*, Bristol: The Policy Press, 2012.

Bickman, L., and Rog, D. J (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2009.

- Buckingham, A., and Saunders, P., *The Survey Methods Workbook*, Polity Press, 2004.
- Byrne, D. *Applying Social Science: The Role of Social Research in Politics, Policy and Practice*, Bristol: The Policy Press, 2011.
- Czaja, R., and Blair, J., *Designing Surveys*, Pine Forge Press, 2005.
- David, M. (ed.), *Case Study Research*, London: Sage, 2006.
- Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, London: Sage, 2003.
- Etzioni, A. 2008. The Unique Methodology of Policy Research in Moran, M., Rein, M. and Goodin, R.E. *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, Oxford: OUP, 2008, pp. 833-843.
- Epstein, M. J. and Yuthas, K. *Measuring and Improving social impacts: A Guide for Nonprofits, Companies and Impact investors*. San Francisco: BK Publishers, 2014.
- Healey, J., *Statistics: A tool of social research*, 8th Edition, Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage, 2009.
- Kee, C.H., Kwan, T., Chan, J. and Ng, T. Introduction to Social Impact Measurement: Hong Kong Context. Hong Kong: Fullness Social Enterprises Society Limited, 2016.
- King, G., Keohane, R.O., and Verba, S., *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Linstone, H.A., and Turoff, M. *The Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications*, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975.
- Ng, P., *Effective writing: a guide for social science students*, Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2003.
- Punch, I., *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, 2nd Edition, London: Sage, 2005.
- Ragin, C.C., and Becker, H.S, *What is a case?: Exploring the foundations of social policy inquiry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Ragin, C.C., and Amoroso L.M., *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method*, Los Angeles: Sage, 2011.
- Silverman, D., *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods of Analyzing Talk, Text, and Interaction*, 3rd Edition, London: Sage, 2006.
- Shadish, W.R., Cook, T. and Campbell, D. *Experimental and Quasi Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*, Belmont: Cengage, 2002.
- Van Maanen, John, Jesper B. Sørensen, and Terence R. Mitchell. "The interplay between theory and method." *Academy of management review* 32.4 (2007): 1145-1154.

Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.

Marking rubric for class participation (10%):

	A A- Excellent 100-80	B+ B B- Good 79-65	C+ C C- Pass 64-50	F Failure 49-0
Contributes to group meetings (25%)	<i>Helps group discussions move forward by demonstrating analytical thinking.</i>	<i>Offers new suggestions to advance the work of the group.</i>	<i>Shares ideas but does not advance the work of the group.</i>	<i>Does not share ideas.</i>
Facilitates the contributions of course participants (25%)	<i>Engages team members in ways that facilitate their contributions to group discussions by both constructively building upon or synthesizing the contributions of others as well as noticing when someone is not participating and inviting them to engage.</i>	<i>Engages team members in ways that facilitate their contributions to meetings by restating the views of other team members and/or asking questions for clarification.</i>	<i>Engages team members by taking turns and listening to others without interrupting.</i>	<i>Does not engage team members and fails to listen to others.</i>
Fosters constructive team environment (25%)	<i>Supports a constructive team climate by doing all of the following:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treats team members respectfully by being polite and constructive in communication.</i> • <i>Uses positive vocal or written tone, facial expressions, and/or body language to convey a positive attitude about the group and its work.</i> • <i>Provides assistance and/or encouragement to team members.</i> 	<i>Supports a constructive team climate by doing any two of the following:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treats team members respectfully by being polite and constructive in communication.</i> • <i>Uses positive vocal or written tone, facial expressions, and/or body language to convey a positive attitude about the group and its work.</i> • <i>Provides assistance and/or encouragement to team members.</i> 	<i>Supports a constructive team climate by doing any one of the following:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treats team members respectfully by being polite and constructive in communication.</i> • <i>Uses positive vocal or written tone, facial expressions, and/or body language to convey a positive attitude about the group and its work.</i> • <i>Provides assistance and/or encouragement to team members.</i> 	<i>Does not support a constructive team climate.</i>
Individual contributions outside of team meetings (25%)	<i>Completes all assigned tasks by deadline. Work accomplished is thorough, comprehensive, and advances teaching and learning in the group. Proactively helps other team members complete their assigned tasks to a similar level of excellence.</i>	<i>Completes all assigned tasks by deadline. Work accomplished advances the project.</i>	<i>Completes all assigned tasks by deadline.</i>	<i>Fails to complete assigned tasks by the deadline.</i>

Marking rubric for group presentation of research (25%):

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Pass	Failure
	A (85-100) A- (80-84)	B+ (75-79) B (70-74) B- (65-69)	C+ (60-64) C (55-59) C- (50-54)	F (0-49)
Data and commands (20%)	<i>Use the correct data set, correct SPSS/NVivo commands, and save the result output in correct format.</i>	<i>Use the correct data set, correct SPSS/NVivo commands. Save the result output in inappropriate format.</i>	<i>The data or the SPSS/NVivo commands are incorrect. The result output is saved in correct format.</i>	<i>Both data set and the SPSS/NVivo commands are incorrect. The result output is saved in correct format.</i>
Representation of findings (20%)	<i>All the findings are correctly and clearly presented.</i>	<i>All the key findings are clearly presented while having 1-2 minor mistakes.</i>	<i>Some of the key findings are clearly presented while 1-2 key findings need more clarity.</i>	<i>Some of the key findings are clearly presented while missing 1-2 key findings or having more than 2 minor mistakes.</i>
Interpretation/argument (20%)	<i>Presents a convincing and well developed argument.</i>	<i>Develops a sound argument.</i>	<i>Argument needs further developmen.</i>	<i>Arguments not clear.</i>
Organisation (20%)	<i>Clear structure.</i>	<i>Clear structure.</i>	<i>Argument needs further development.</i>	<i>Arguments not clear.</i>
Style of presentation (20%)	<i>Demonstrate excellent presentation skills and communicati-on with audience.</i>	<i>Demonstrate competent presentation skills and communicat-ion with audience.</i>	<i>Demonstrate good presentation skills and communicat-ion with audience</i>	<i>Demonstrate fair/poor presentation skills and communicat-ion with audience</i>

Marking rubric for group fieldwork project (25%):

Grade		Understanding of topic (20%)	Use of evidence (20%)	Critical analysis (20%)	Structure of argument (20%)	Writing and referencing (20%)
A A- (100-80)	Excellent	<i>Comprehensive understanding and coverage of issues. Insightful and well-informed. Clearly answers the question.</i>	<i>Wide range of evidence used to support arguments. Thoroughly researched. Use of primary sources.</i>	<i>Excellent critical awareness of subject matter and current issues. Shows original thinking and analysis.</i>	<i>Clear structure. Presents a convincing and well-developed argument.</i>	<i>Thorough referencing throughout. Uses references correctly. Demonstrates excellent writing skills.</i>
B+ B B- (79-65)	Good	<i>Clear discussion of relevant issues. Shows good insight into the subject. Answers the question.</i>	<i>Good use of evidence to support arguments.</i>	<i>Goes beyond description. Analyses material to develop argument.</i>	<i>Clear structure. Develops a sound argument.</i>	<i>Generally uses references correctly but some parts less well referenced. Competent writing skills.</i>
C+ C C- (64-50)	Pass	<i>Shows some coverage and understanding of main issues. Does not answer the question fully/directly enough.</i>	<i>Adequate range of evidence used. Could have drawn on more suitable evidence.</i>	<i>More description than analysis in content. Needs to draw material together to develop argument.</i>	<i>Argument needs further development. Structure needs more clarity.</i>	<i>Some parts not referenced correctly. Writing skills could be improved.</i>
F (49-0)	Failure	<i>Superficial coverage and significant misunderstanding of the issues. Does not answer the question fully/directly enough.</i>	<i>Relies on limited range of sources. Has not been thoroughly researched.</i>	<i>Too descriptive. Needs to draw material together to develop argument.</i>	<i>Arguments not clear. Structure is not clear. Some repetition. Little clear linkage from point to point.</i>	<i>Referencing is inconsistent. Writing skills need considerable improvement. Sentence structure needs work. Needed proof reading.</i>

Marking rubric for individual research proposal (40%):

Grade		Understanding of topic (20%)	Use of evidence (20%)	Critical analysis (20%)	Structure of argument (20%)	Writing and referencing (20%)
A A- (100-80)	Excellent	<i>Comprehensive understanding and coverage of issues. Insightful and well-informed. Clearly answers the question.</i>	<i>Wide range of evidence used to support arguments. Thoroughly researched. Use of primary sources.</i>	<i>Excellent critical awareness of subject matter and current issues. Shows original thinking and analysis.</i>	<i>Clear structure. Presents a convincing and well developed argument.</i>	<i>Thorough referencing throughout Uses references correctly. Demonstrates excellent writing skills.</i>
B+ B B- (79-65)	Good	<i>Clear discussion of relevant issues. Shows good insight into the subject. Answers the question.</i>	<i>Good use of evidence to support arguments.</i>	<i>Goes beyond description. Analyses material to develop argument.</i>	<i>Clear structure. Develops a sound argument.</i>	<i>Generally uses references correctly but some parts less well referenced. Competent writing skills.</i>
C+ C C- (64-50)	Pass	<i>Shows some coverage and understanding of main issues. Does not answer the question fully/directly enough.</i>	<i>Adequate range of evidence used. Could have drawn on more suitable evidence.</i>	<i>More description than analysis in content. Needs to draw material together to develop argument.</i>	<i>Argument needs further development. Structure needs more clarity.</i>	<i>Some parts not referenced correctly. Writing skills could be improved.</i>
F (49-0)	Failure	<i>Superficial coverage and significant misunderstanding of the issues. Does not answer the question fully/directly enough.</i>	<i>Relies on limited range of sources. Has not been thoroughly researched.</i>	<i>Too descriptive. Needs to draw material together to develop argument.</i>	<i>Arguments not clear. Structure is not clear. Some repetition. Little clear linkage from point to point.</i>	<i>Referencing is inconsistent. Writing skills need considerable improvement. Sentence structure needs work. Needed proof reading.</i>