

Q&A on Graduation Thesis (for students)

1. What is the purpose of Graduation Thesis?

Graduation Thesis is a two-term capstone course recommended by UGC for the four-year curriculum. In this capstone course, students are expected to integrate their sociological knowledge and research skills on a concrete issue.

2. When should I take this course?

As a capstone course, Graduation Thesis is intended for the final year students, i.e. the fourth year of the study. This course must start from Term 1 and complete in Term 2 in the same academic year.

3. What do I do in this course?

Students in the same class can work on an individual or a group research paper with a theme advised by their supervisor. At the end of the second term, students should complete a research paper in a form similar to an academic journal article.

4. Do I need to choose my own thesis group and get myself enrolled to the class?

For the next academic year 2019/20, the department will organize 3 graduation thesis groups to be supervised by three teachers. Students will have a chance to indicate their preferences for the three supervisors. In case too many students choose the same supervisor and registrations exceed the student quota of each group, draw of lots will be held to decide who can be successfully enrolled to the group. The second choice of all the remaining students will then be considered. Draw of lots will be held again if there are too many students choosing the same supervisor of their second choice. Students who have not admitted to any group in the end, together with those who have not indicated their preferences before the deadline, will then be assigned to a group with remaining quota.

The tentative group lists will be announced to all students concerned in late May. Students will be pre-assigned to the two required courses of graduation thesis and do not need to register on CUSIS. After the course registration is completed, usually around August, students can refer to the notice from CUSIS for the course assignment.

5. Can I pick my own research topic?

Students can suggest interested sociological topics to their supervisors for consideration. It may not be necessary to be related to the supervisors' research areas and teaching interests. The supervisors will then advise the theme of study for every individual/group under his/her supervision. Students are expected to learn from each other in the research process.

6. How often do students meet with the supervisor?

The supervisor and their students will meet 13 times throughout the academic year, around 6-7 times every semester. These meetings could be consultations, discussions, field trips, and presentations. The timeslot for each class will be pre-assigned similar to other courses. The exact schedule for the meetings will be arranged by the supervisor in accordance with his/her course design. Students may also initiate meetings with their supervisor on a need basis.

7. How research activities are organized?

The supervisors will decide the format of conducting research and will inform students in their first formal meeting. It is possible that (a) students are further divided into smaller groups consisting of 2 to 6 persons, and each group completes a group research paper; or (b) students conduct the research together and share their research materials, but each student writes up his/her own research paper, possibly in a specific domain of the study approved by the supervisor.

8. How do teachers assess my performance?

Graduation Thesis is a two-term course and students will be given a letter grade to reflect their performance in each term. The performance will consist of a group component and an individual component. Your supervisor will explain the assessment criteria in the first formal meeting. If you are not clear about the assessment scheme, you should consult your supervisor for further clarification.

9. What are the requirements for the final report?

The research thesis should follow the format of an academic journal article. The length of the thesis may vary by the number of students authoring the thesis. Assuming double spacing, 12-point font size, and 1-inch margin on A4 paper, we recommend no less than 30 pages for a group paper by 5 to 6 students, 25 pages by 2 to 3 students, and 20 pages for an individual paper. You need to consult your supervisor to confirm the specific requirements for your group/individual thesis.