

**City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus**

**offered by School of Law
with effect from Semester A 2024/25**

Part I Course Overview

Course Title:	Dissertation
Course Code:	LW6137E
Course Duration:	One semester or two semesters as follows (i) in Semester A and in Semester B of the same academic year; or (ii) in Semester B and in the following Summer Term; or (iii) in Semester B and in Semester A of the immediate following academic year; or (iv) in one semester (Semester A or Semester B)
Credit Units:	6
Level:	P6
Medium of Instruction:	English
Medium of Assessment:	English
Prerequisites: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Dissertation Coordinator's approval of a research proposal submitted by the student
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>	LW6537E, LW6551E, LW5551 & LW5552 (Students who have completed or are taking LW6551E /LW5551/LW5552 are not allowed to take LW6137E)

Remarks: Students enrolled in LW6137C/E are required to attend a seminar on legal research recommended by the course leader.

Part II Course Details

1. Abstract

This course aims to develop students' ability to carry out independent research and to develop expertise in a given subject area through critical application of theory and techniques provided by the course. Students will be required to undertake individually supervised research and produce a dissertation.

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.	Identify and critically evaluate a legal area for research based on current relevance and impact.		√	√	
2.	Conduct in-depth independent research on the chosen subject area.		√	√	
3.	Evaluate and synthesize relevant literature and resources to support the dissertation.		√	√	
4.	Critically apply selected theory and techniques developed during the programme to the chosen area.		√	√	√
5.	Communicate effectively in writing a programme of work and, if required, orally defend the dissertation in a logical, precise and coherent manner.		√	√	√
		100%			

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 real-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. Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

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

LTA	Brief Description	CILO No.					Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	5	
	Focused Independent Research: Students will conduct independent research on a topic that aligns with their academic interests and programme objectives. The course will provide a list of suggested topics to guide student selection, ensuring relevance and feasibility.	√	√	√	√	√	15 hours of individual consultation per student in total

	Each student will be matched with a supervisor whose expertise aligns with the chosen research topic. This process will be structured to ensure an optimal fit based on academic interests and available faculty expertise. Supervisors will facilitate access to a network of practitioners and academics for interdisciplinary insight and feedback, enhancing the depth and breadth of the research.	√	√	√	√	√	
	Clear guidelines will be issued for dissertation progress, including mandatory bi-weekly meetings with the supervisor to discuss milestones, challenges, and next steps. The supervisor and the student will establish a regular schedule of progress reports and consultations. The schedule will depend on the nature of the dissertation. Supervisors will actively guide students to keep their research focused and on schedule, while also fostering student independence through self-managed goals and reflection on progress.	√	√	√	√	√	

If LW6137E is taken as a two-semester course, the normal schedule of progress will be:

	Semesters A and B of the same academic year	Semester B and Semester A of the immediate following academic year	Week	Semester B and the following Summer Term	Week
1. Approval of the dissertation topic, by the Dissertation Coordinator	Semester A	Semester B	1	Semester B	1
2. Approval of an interim report, by the supervisor	Semester A	Semester B	6	Semester B	6
3. Approval of a draft dissertation, by the supervisor	Semester B	Semester A	5	Summer Term	3
4. Submission of the completed dissertation	Semester B	Semester A	13	Summer Term	6

If LW6137E is taken as a one-semester course (Semester A or Semester B), the normal schedule of progress will be:

	Week
1. Approval of the dissertation topic, by the Dissertation Coordinator	1
2. Approval of an interim report, by the supervisor	4
3. Approval of a draft dissertation, by the supervisor	9
4. Submission of the completed dissertation	13

The interim report is intended to establish a framework for completion of the dissertation. It must show adequate progress in the research project and state:

- the aims and objectives
- literature review
- definition of problems
- methodology
- structure of the dissertation
- development plan including schedule for completion and resource requirements.

Supervisors are not responsible for the production of research material or for the preparation of the dissertation. This is the sole responsibility of students.

Students are expected to be self-motivated and to independently plan and monitor their own progress. They should maintain regular contact with their supervisors throughout the period of research and preparation.

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

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

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.					Weighting	Remarks
	1	2	3	4	5		
Continuous Assessment: 100%							
<p>The dissertation must be submitted by the end of the 13th week of Semester B or Semester A, or the 6th week of Summer Term whichever is appropriate.</p> <p>The dissertation must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the standards in the “Regulations for the Form of Theses” as contained in the City University of Hong Kong Calendar. The length of the main text of the dissertation shall be in the range of 16,000 to 20,000 words (excluding footnotes). The main text should be supplemented by footnotes as per the <i>Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities</i> (OSCOLA).</p> <p>The dissertation will be assessed on the basis of the finished written work. The dissertation will be marked by two assessors, each marking to maximum of 50%, giving a total of 100% for the dissertation. One assessor is the dissertation supervisor. The second assessor, will normally be a member of the academic staff of the School, except that in some cases, where relevant expertise is required, that assessor may be from another department or from an outside organization.</p>	√	√	√	√	√	100%	The use of Generative AI tools is not allowed.
						100%	

On the recommendation of the assessors, the Dissertation Coordinator may require the student to present and defend the dissertation. This will not contribute to the final mark. The purpose of the oral presentation is to test the student's comprehension of the content and context of the dissertation, and to confirm that the work presented is that of the student. The oral presentation will be made before a panel appointed by the Dissertation Coordinator and normally comprise the Dissertation Coordinator or the Chairman of the Examination Board as Chairman, the dissertation supervisor and the second assessor.

Applicable to students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter

Students must obtain an overall mark of 40% in order to pass the course.

Applicable to students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024

Students must obtain an overall mark of 50% in order to pass the course.

5. Assessment Rubrics

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

Applicable to students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Dissertation	Dissertation will be assessed for Originality, Breadth of Research, Citation & Authority, Quality of Presentation, Logic, Accuracy, Independent Thought and Substance.	Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyse and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.	Evidence of grasp of subject, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.	Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.	Sufficient familiarity with the subject matter to enable the student to progress without repeating the course.	Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited, or irrelevant use of literature.

Applicable to students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B)	Marginal (B-, C+, C)	Failure (F)
Dissertation	Dissertation will be assessed for Originality, Breadth of Research, Citation & Authority, Quality of Presentation, Logic, Accuracy, Independent Thought and Substance.	High	Significant	Moderate	Inadequate

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.)

Dissertation

There is no formal syllabus. Students will be required to undertake individually supervised research and dissertation preparation.

2. Reading List

2.1 Recommended Readings

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

BAHRIJ, John, *Hong Kong Legal Research: Methods and Skills* (Hong Kong: Sweet & Maxwell Asia, 2007).

BLACKMAN, Josh, *How To Use Internet For Legal Research* (New York: Find/SVP, 1996)

CANE, Peter and KRITZER, Herbert, *The Oxford Handbook of Empirical Legal Research* (Oxford Handbooks in Law) (2012)

COTTRELL, Jill, *Legal Research: A Guide for Hong Kong Students* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997).

Faculty of Law, University of Oxford, *Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities* (2012).

GARNER, Bryan A, *Legal Writing in Plain English: A Text with Exercises*, 2nd edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

HANSON, Sharon, *Legal Method & Reasoning*, 2nd ed. (London: Cavendish, 2003)

HOLLAND, James A & WEBB, Julian S, *Learning Legal Rules: A Student's Guide to Legal Method and Reasoning*, 6th ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

HUTCHISON, Terry, *Researching and Writing in Law* (Sydney: Lawbook Co, 2002).

KUNZ, Christina L, et al., *The Process of Legal Research*, 5th ed. (Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Law & Business, 2000).

MARKESINIS, Basil S, (ed.), *Law Making, Law Finding and Law Shaping: The Diverse Influences* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)

REIMANN, Mathias and ZIMMERMANN, Reinhard, *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Law* (Oxford Handbooks) (2008)

VOLOKH, Eugene, *Academic Legal Writing: Law Review Articles, Student Notes, Seminar Papers, and Getting on Law Review*, 4th edn (New York: Foundation Press, 2010).

WATT, Robert, *Concise Legal Research*, 4th ed. (Sydney: Federation Press, 2001)