

**City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus**

**offered by School of Law
with effect from Semester A 2020/21**

Part I Course Overview

Course Title:	<u>Independent Research</u>
Course Code:	<u>LW5552</u>
Course Duration:	<u>One semester</u>
Credit Units:	<u>3</u>
Level:	<u>P5</u>
Medium of Instruction:	<u>English</u>
Medium of Assessment:	<u>English</u>
Prerequisites: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	<u>#LW5622 Legal methods, Research and Writing (this requirement applies to JD student only)</u>
Precursors: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	<u>Nil</u>
Equivalent Courses: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	<u>LW6551E or LW5551 LW6537C/E and LW6137C/E Dissertation</u>
Exclusive Courses: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	<u>(Students who have completed or are taking any of these Dissertation courses are not allowed to take LW5552 Independent Research.)</u>

Part II Course Details

1. Abstract

This course aims (i) to develop students' ability to identify a suitable topic and carry out independent research under the supervision of an experienced staff, (ii) to give students the freedom and flexibility to develop expertise in a subject area of his/her interest, and (iii) to harness various skills of students to write a publishable paper.

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)	DEC related learning outcomes		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Identify a suitable research topic and design a research proposal on an area of law worth pursuing.		✓	✓	
2.	Search, read, analyse and cite research materials relevant to one's research proposal.		✓	✓	✓
3.	Critically apply selected legal theories and techniques to analyse the subject matter of the paper.		✓	✓	✓
4.	Write a substantial paper of individual research of publishable quality and with an element of originality.		✓	✓	✓
		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 self-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.

Alignment of CILOs with PILOs:

PILOs		CILOs
1	Explain and assess specified areas of the law and the legal system of Hong Kong, with particular emphasis on the law in action and the dynamic interplay between law and other social phenomena.	2,3,4
2	Assess the common law system and its values, and its interaction with the law and legal system of mainland China, the East Asian region and the wider world.	1
3	Explain, interpret and apply main principles of ethics, civil duty, and social and professional responsibility.	2,3,4
4	Critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of law as a means of regulating society in the context of competing and conflicting interests.	2,3,4
5	Demonstrate and apply skills of legal analysis and reasoning, of legal research, or problem solving, and of oral and written communication to a level appropriate to a graduate-entry degree in law.	

3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

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

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Consultation with supervisor - Each student will be required to work independently, undertaking an individual piece of work related to his/her chosen area of research. Students will be encouraged to come up with their own topics, although the supervisor may provide some guidance.	1-4	1
2	Upon appointment and in consultation with the student the supervisor should set up a monitoring programme. That programme should include the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. An initial meeting at which the independent research paper proposal is discussed including, the proposed research, methodology, timetable for collection and collation, and the general timetable for the monitoring the independent research paper into the future. ii. Presentation of an initial draft to the supervisor for consideration, analysis and comment. iii. Submission of a final draft. This final draft may or may not warrant comment from the supervisor and it would be a matter for the student and the supervisor to determine at what stage and for what purpose this final draft is to be submitted. 	1-4	Emails and face-to-face consultations as scheduled.

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

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

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

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.	Weighting	Remarks
Continuous Assessment: 100%			
Coursework (research paper)	1-4	100%	
Examination: 0% (duration: , if applicable)		100%	

A research paper must be submitted by the end of the semester (the exact date is to be advised in due course). The length of the main text of the research paper should be in the range of 8,000 to 10,000 words (excluding footnotes). The main text should be supplemented by footnotes as per the most recent version of the *Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities* (OSCOLA).

The research paper must be coherent and persuasive. It should be based on sound scholarly research and adequately supported by relevant authorities. Research papers will be assessed for substance, originality, independent thought, breadth of research, quality of presentation, logic, accuracy, and citation style and authorities

The faculty who supervised the independent research and another anonymous faculty member mark the research paper simultaneously. The relevant External Academic Advisor and/or a third marker may moderate assessment of the research paper, especially if there is a significant difference in grades assigned by the supervisor and the second marker.

5. Assessment Rubrics

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

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
Independent Research paper	The paper 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.

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.)

Independent research and writing.

Detailed Syllabus

There is no formal syllabus. Students undertaking independent research must find a faculty member with relevant research interest and expertise to provide academic supervision. Students should prepare a research proposal on a subject area of his/her chosen stream of study and obtain approval from the faculty supervisor.

2. Reading List

2.1 Compulsory Readings

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1. Christina L Kunz, et al., *The Process of Legal Research*, 5th ed. (Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Law & Business, 2000).
2. Robert Watt, *Concise Legal Research*, 4th ed. (Sydney: Federation Press, 2001)
3. Basil S Markesinis (ed.), *Law Making, Law Finding and Law Shaping: The Diverse Influences* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)
4. Josh Blackman, *How To Use Internet For Legal Research* (New York: Find/SVP, 1996)
5. Terry Hutchinson, *Researching and Writing in Law* (Sydney: Lawbook Co, 2002).
6. John Bahrij, *Hong Kong Legal Research: Methods and Skills* (Hong Kong: Sweet & Maxwell Asia, 2007).
7. Eugene Volokh, *Academic Legal Writing: Law Review Articles, Student Notes, Seminar Papers, and Getting on Law Review*, 4th edn (New York: Foundation Press, 2010).
8. James A Holland & Julian S Webb, *Learning Legal Rules: A Student's Guide to Legal Method and Reasoning*, 6th ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
9. Sharon Hanson, *Legal Method & Reasoning*, 2nd ed. (London: Cavendish, 2003)
10. Jill Cottrell, *Legal Research: A Guide for Hong Kong Students* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997).
11. Faculty of Law, University of Oxford, *Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities* (2012).
12. Bryan A Garner, *Legal Writing in Plain English: A Text with Exercises* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).