Ph.D. Degree Programme - Computational Social Science Concentration (Full-time)

Study Scheme
Applicable to students admitted in 2025-26

1. Coursework Requirement

(a) Excluding COMM 8200, SOSC 7010 and SOSC 7020, students are required to complete a minimum of 24 units of courses for graduation.

Required Courses		18 units
COMM 5220	Communication Theories I	
COMM 5250	Writing for Research and Publication	
COMM 5320	Quantitative Communication Research	
COMM 6220	Communication Theories II	
COMM 6320	Digital Research	
SOCI 6002	Advanced Methodology	

Elective Courses [Choose at least two*]		6 units
CMSC 5707	Advanced Topics in Artificial Intelligence	
CMSC 5733	Social Computing	
CMSC 5734	Network Science	
CSCI 5150	Machine Learning Algorithms and Applications	
CSCI 5350	Advanced Topics in Game Theory	
CSCI 5640	Natural Language Processing	
ECON 5150	Applied Econometrics	
ECON 5180	Economics and Data Science	
ENGG 5103	Techniques for Data Mining	
ENGG 5108	Big Data Analytics	
GISM 5065	Geospatial Big Data for Smart Urban Planning	
MMAT 5370	Social and Economic Networks: Theory, Modelling and Computations	

* One elective course must be taken within two years from the admission date.

Students must achieve a minimum grade of C in the above elective courses. Students who have taken similar required or elective courses listed in the study scheme may apply for course/unit exemption. A maximum of 12 units of unit exemption can be granted upon approval of the Division Head.

Total: 24 units

(b) Seminar Courses
Students are required to take SOSC 7010 Seminar (I): Computational Social Science every term in the 2nd year. Students are required to take SOSC 7020 Seminar (II): Computational Social Science every term from the 1st term of the 3rd year for up to four terms.

(c) Thesis Monitoring Course
Students are required to take COMM 8200 Thesis in Progress every term starting from the time of admission, throughout the preparation of thesis, until its completion. Students will gain the units each time they pass COMM 8200.

2. Qualifying Examination

(a) Qualifying examination
Advancement to Ph.D. candidature is conditional upon passing qualifying examinations. The examinations consist of two parts. Part I is on Theory and Quantitative Methodology, Part II is a Proposal Defense.

(b) Every year we have a fixed timetable for Ph.D. students to take qualifying examinations. The examinations time cannot be changed unless for specific reasons.

(c) A student will be discontinued from studies if s/he cannot pass the qualifying examination within 36 months. However, in special cases, the Graduate Council may on the recommendation of the Graduate Division concerned grant a student extension beyond the above maximum period.

3. Study plan

Students must submit a study plan, with the advice of the supervisor, for the approval of the Graduate Panel of the Board of School of Journalism and Communication within six months after registration. The Division Head will help the student search for a supervisor within the first semester of study.

4. Thesis

(a) Thesis proposal
Students must submit a thesis proposal by the end of the 1st term of the 4th year. Students are NOT allowed to change their thesis topic after the proposal defense. (unless under special circumstances)

(b) Thesis supervisors
Students are NOT encouraged to change their supervisors after the 2nd academic year begins. (unless under special circumstances)

(c) Students are required to submit a research thesis and pass an oral examination for graduation.

5. Other Requirements

(a) Students must fulfill the Term Assessment Requirement of the Graduate School. For details, please refer to Section 13.0 “Unsatisfactory Performance and Discontinuation of Studies” of the General Regulations Governing Postgraduate Studies which can be accessed from the Graduate School Homepage: http://www.gs.cuhk.edu.hk/.

(b) Students must achieve a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0 in order to graduate, unless special approval is granted by the Graduate Council.

Students are required to complete the following Improving Postgraduate Learning (IPL) in their first year of study for partial fulfillment of candidacy requirements:

(c) Students are required to complete and pass an IPL module on “Basics of Research Data Management” in their first year of study, with effect from the 2022-23 intake. This is an online module and relevant information can be accessed from the website: https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/clear/download/IPL-Researchskills.pdf.

(d) Students are required to submit a Data Management Plan (DMP), with effect from the 2025-26 intake.

In addition to completing the IPL modules stipulated for partial fulfillment of candidacy requirements, students are also required to complete the following IPL modules for graduation:

(e) Complete an IPL module on “Observing Intellectual Property and Copyright Law during Research”. This is an online module and relevant information can be accessed from the website: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/clear/prodev/ipl.html.

(f) Complete an online Research Ethics Training (RET) module on “Publication Ethics” offered by the Office of Research and Knowledge Transfer Services (ORKTS) and obtain a valid Publication Ethics Certificate for graduation. Relevant information can be accessed from the RET website at https://www.research-ethics.cuhk.edu.hk/web/.

(g) The final DMP should have been shared to the CUHK community on DMPTool or the relevant platform that CUHK provides when submitting the final version of the thesis/portfolio to the Graduate School. Students are required to have published the data on the CUHK Research Data Repository or an open data repository with a valid Digital Object Identifier (DOI) or other forms of permanent identifier when submitting the final version of the thesis/portfolio. Upon thesis supervisor’s endorsement, students can decide on how much data from the research project is to be published.

(h) Students should at least have one refereed international conference presentation that requires submission of full paper (e.g. Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, Annual Conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, National Communication Association Annual Convention or other equivalent conferences) and one single-authored or coauthored refereed Chinese or English-language journal article of any tier accepted/published before their graduation.

6. Unsatisfactory Performance

A student whose thesis/portfolio is not passed but re-submission is allowed and re-examination is required must re-write and re-submit the thesis/portfolio to the satisfaction of the Thesis/Assessment Committee before being recommended for the award of degree. Such re-submission must be made within twelve months from the date of the official notification of the result of the first examination and within the student’s prescribed maximum period of study. Only one re-submission of thesis/portfolio is allowed.

7. Additional Requirements

PhD students in Computational Social Science concentration must fulfill additional requirements listed below. Failure to do so, students will be put on academic probation.

(a) Completion of the equivalent of a publishable research paper, a first or solo authored manuscript by the 1st term of the 3rd year, accepted by the supervisor and endorsed by the Graduate Division Head.

(b) Completion of a Computational Social Science concentration examination by the end of the 3rd academic year. This examination is similar to the qualifying examination, except that its focus has to be complementary to the qualifying examination and the topic should be approved by the student's supervisor. The procedure, format and evaluation will be similar to a qualifying examination.

8. Remarks

With the approval of the Division Head, in lieu of the courses on the elective course list, students can take other courses within and/or outside the Division of Communication.

Please read the Study Scheme in conjunction with the email on "Completing certain Improving Postgraduate Learning modules in the first year of study (for fulfilment of Ph.D. and Taught Doctoral candidacy requirements) with retroactive effect from 2022-23 intake" dated 27 October 2023: https://www.gs.cuhk.edu.hk/download/IPL.pdf.