Advanced Thesis Writing

Aim:

The course aims to enhance students’ competence and skills for writing about their research and apply such skills to their writing both within and beyond the course.

Content:

The course will focus on developing students’ ability to refine clarity and conciseness in idea expression, and critically analyse language use in thesis writing. Students will examine and discuss language features of research extracts taken from various disciplines. This will enable them to use language more critically and genres specific to their disciplines in writing their own theses.

Topics to be covered include:
- analysis of thesis structure and organisation
- discourse features and language use in critical review of research literature
- explicit statements of research gaps, hypotheses and research questions
- concise and succinct writing of abstract, methodology, results, findings, discussions and conclusions
- use of rhetorical conventions and devices across thesis sections
- use of evaluative language, indicating writers’ stance, voice, style and tone.

There will be critical analyses of texts selected by teachers and students and corpus activities to support some of the discussions. Outlining/writing of short texts will be used to demonstrate advanced thesis writing skills and peer/teacher feedback will be provided. Texts and other resources will be recommended for out-of-class learning and self-reflection on writing.

Organization:

This is a 24-hour course, consisting of one 3-hour lesson each week for eight weeks. Each lesson will consist of brief input sessions from the teacher followed by small group discussions of texts which illustrate the learning focus covered in the input sessions.

Enrollment:

The Advanced Thesis Writing course (Humanities/Sciences) targets at students who have experience in writing an undergraduate or postgraduate research thesis in English before joining HKU for their postgraduate education. They should meet the following prerequisites for the course: (1) Students graduated from an undergraduate or postgraduate programme that used English as the medium of instruction; and (2) Students have successfully written an undergraduate or postgraduate research thesis in English.

Enrollment will be processed in paper form, and the Graduate School would notify individual students of the results of their application for the course.

Assessment:

Assessment will take the form of a 1600-word portfolio related to the students’ research area. The portfolio should consist of a literature review and a critique. The topic should be chosen
by the student, preferably in collaboration with his/her supervisor, and the portfolio must be submitted to the Centre for Applied English Studies for assessment within two weeks of completion of the course. The student will be graded Pass or Fail on the basis of this portfolio.

**Outcomes:**

At the end of the course, students’ competence and skills for writing about their research will be enhanced. More specifically, students will be able to:

- demonstrate strong ability to create cohesive text and evaluate relative importance of ideas in argumentation;
- appropriately use sophisticated linguistic features, rhetorical devices, citation and referencing conventions for research writing in their disciplines; and
- apply critical knowledge of communicative organization in writing a thesis.