

Semester 1

Research Design and Policy Analysis

Course # MEDS 5124

Pre-requisites and Co-requisites: None

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to research methods, research design, and applied policy research. It equips students with practical skills to formulate research questions, critically assess evidence, design qualitative and quantitative studies, develop questionnaires and other research instruments, and prepare sound research proposals. The course also introduces key approaches to policy analysis. Students will learn how to analyse policy issues, assess and criticize scholarly materials, and develop policy papers and research proposal using clear and effective writing and storytelling techniques.

The course balances methodological foundations with practical application, with particular attention to public policy issues in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. Examples will draw on topics such as governance, natural resources, labour migration, digitalisation, and public sector reform. Through practical exercises and assignments, students will develop research and analytical skills relevant to careers in government, think tanks, NGOs, international organisations, and academia. The course also serves as the foundation of the master's thesis pathway: the research proposal developed in this course is designed so that it can be carried forward, with the student's thesis supervisor, into the thesis proposal in later semesters

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Formulate** precise and researchable policy questions in the Central Asian context.
2. **Design** rigorous studies that align research methodologies and data collection methods with research questions, drawing on key epistemological approaches, including positivism and interpretivism.
3. **Conduct** and **evaluate** reviews of recent scholarly literature, identifying key findings, patterns, theories, and knowledge gaps that provide opportunities for original contributions.
4. **Analyse policy issues** and be able to conduct policy analysis.
5. **Assess** and **critique** peer-reviewed articles and scholarly arguments.
6. **Select** and **integrate** qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis, including mixed-methods designs.
7. **Apply** sampling and measurement principles to design credible quantitative and survey-based studies, and develop valid qualitative data collection instruments, including interview guides and focus group protocols.
8. **Develop** well-structured research proposals that meet academic and policy standards.
9. **Present** and **communicate** research findings persuasively to diverse audiences.

Course Assessments and Grading

The grading follows the Grading System outlined in the **UCA Academic Policies**.

ITEM	DUE DATE/TIMELINE	WEIGHT, IN %
Class Participation	n/a	10%
Critical Article Review (CAR)	Week 6, 23 November (Groupwork Presentation in Class)	25%
Fieldwork/Data Analysis (FWA) Assignment	Week 8, 7 December 2026 (for option A) Week 13, 25 January 2027 (for option B)	25%
Research Proposal (RP) + Individual Defense + Peer Review Report	Week 14, 1 February 2027 (Research Proposal) Week 15-16 (Individual Defense Presentation) Week 16 (Peer Review)	(20+ 10+10) = 40%
		Total: 100%