

SALSA Scheme – Elite Athletes at SS

What is the SALSA Scheme?

Launched in 2022 by the University Grants Committee (UGC), the Student-Athlete Learning Support and Admission Scheme ('SALSA Scheme') offers elite athletes opportunities to pursue dual-track career development. The SALSA Scheme is a direct admission scheme via which universities admit athletes with remarkable achievements in sports. Under the Scheme, universities provide elite athletes with a range of central and individual guidance and support in different aspects, including academic learning, personal wellbeing and career development, with a view to catering to their needs as full-time athletes and university students.

Either nominated for admission by Hong Kong Sports Institute or have reached an elite level at a recognised National Sports Association, students admitted through the SALSA Scheme are professional athletes eligible to represent Hong Kong in international competitions. In the past academic year, the student-athletes at the Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences ('SS') represented Hong Kong in major competitions across the globe, including the WTT Feeder Doha, the WTT Feeder Düsseldorf III, the FISU University World Cup Combat Sports and the Karate1 Series A – Koçaeli. In addition, two of the students have been awarded the University Sports Federation of Hong Kong (USFHK) Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year in 2022/23. With outstanding performance in their profession, they are some of the best in their fields.

The SS SALSA Team



Currently, SS has six student-athletes under the SALSA Scheme. Managing the demands of dual-track development – pursuing both athletic excellence at the professional level and academic goals at university – is not easy. In order to help them adapt to the challenge, SS has its own SALSA Team to back them up with support in both academics and personal growth. Members of the SALSA Team include Prof Anna Hui, Dr Cecilia Tam and Ms Claire Lau.

Prof Anna Hui

Director of Student Development

My first encounter with the SALSA students was in the lectures and individual consultations of the Basic

(From right) Dr Cecilia Tam, Prof Anna Hui, and Ms Claire Lau

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Psychology course. I am impressed by their talents in bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence and the passion and curiosity in connecting psychology with sports performance and academic motivation. Being both an athlete and university student is demanding and an individual needs excellent persistence and time management to excel in both roles. It is my pleasure to work with them to achieve their academic goals.

Dr Cecilia Tam

Student Learning Advisor

Working closely with student-athletes in the past year was a wonderful experience. Our SALSA students have demonstrated many good qualities and have shown a strong passion for both their sports careers and academic success. Although they have encountered many difficulties, for example, they were always out of Hong Kong for training and competitions and thus had to skip most of the lectures, they showed remarkable

resilience in overcoming their limitation. Here, I want to thank our colleagues for providing support for their learning. Also, I want to thank those students who actively worked with them in group assignments and shared with them what they had missed in lectures. In the coming year, I hope there will be more opportunities for all of us to meet our SALSA students so that we can learn more from each other.

Ms Claire Lau

Executive Officer

It is my pleasure to get to know the elite student-athletes and have the opportunity to provide them with support at the Department. I truly respect them for the perseverance and diligence they have demonstrated in both their sports careers and academic learning. I hope the support of the Department can help them achieve more academically, professionally and personally.

Student-Athletes at SS

Ho Kwan Kit

*Bachelor of Social Sciences
Table Tennis Athlete*

I think the SALSA Scheme has provided an opportunity to student-athletes like me to enrich themselves at university. All academic staff at the SS Department have taken very good care of each of us, and have greatly helped us with our challenges in learning.



Law Sin Yi

*Bachelor of Social Sciences in Criminology and Sociology
Taekwondo Athlete*

In my life as a university student, I can deeply feel the support the Department has offered to student-athletes. Being a full-time athlete, apart from attending intensive routine training, I also have to travel outside of Hong Kong for training camps and competitions, which makes it difficult for me to catch up with my learning progress at university. However, when I encounter learning difficulties, professors and other staff at the Department are always happy to help, and they allow flexibility in my studies, so I can focus on my sports career.

With the help of the Hong Kong Sports Institute, the Physical Education Section of Student Development Services, and the SS Department, I have the option to extend my study period under the SALSA Scheme, which allows me to pursue dual-track development in sports and academics. I am really grateful for that.



Leung Sze Lok

*Bachelor of Social Sciences
Badminton Athlete*

The SALSA Scheme has eased my worries as a student-athlete, because the academic staff are very friendly and they understand that we have routine training in the morning. They arranged consultation sessions for us, or sent us recordings of lectures, so that we were not concerned about missing lectures and could focus on our regular training.

Lo Sum Man

*Bachelor of Social Sciences
Karate Athlete*

The academic staff of the SS Department always try their best to support student-athletes regarding our academic needs. This has helped us to balance the development of our sports career and university life. What I have learned in the lessons at university could also be applied to my daily life.



Pau Yik Man

*Bachelor of Social Sciences
Table Tennis Athlete*

What has impressed me most about SS is when I entered CityU on the first day, I was warmly welcomed at the Department office. I was then introduced to the academic staff, and we got the opportunity to get to know one another. Staff from the Department also meet up with us from time to time to learn how we are have been doing. This has helped us to keep track of our learning progress and hence has made it easier for us to balance our studies and sports training.

Wong Cho Wai Gabriel

*Bachelor of Social Sciences in Psychology
Wushu Athlete*

The SALSA scheme not only allows me to pursue my studies at university, but has also provided support to my athletic career and academic development. Moreover, the SS Department knows my needs as a student-athlete well. Whenever there are competitions or training abroad, the Department would try their best to cater to our needs. I am truly grateful for the support I have received at CityU.



Meeting new faculty members — Prof Lawrence Wong



Prof Lawrence Wong joined the SS Department in February 2023. Prof Wong received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Hong Kong. Prior to joining SS, he has worked as a Clinical Psychologist in hospital settings in Hong Kong and Sydney, Australia. He conducts both applied and basic science research focusing on sleep and mental health. He employs clinical (e.g., structured clinical interview, standardised neuropsychological assessment) and neurophysiological measures (e.g., polysomnography and actigraphy) to examine how sleep health contributes to wellbeing among both healthy and patient populations.



Why are you interested in sleep and mental health?

I have always been interested in psychology, particularly about how we can scientifically explain why we perform certain behaviours. I later on had the chance to participate in a sleep research project as a volunteer, and I was fascinated that most if not all of our behaviours are indeed related to our sleep patterns. For instance, research and perhaps daily experience told us that poor sleep is likely to affect what we want to eat, how we feel, or simply what we want (or don't want) to do the next day. From the perspective of clinical psychology, individuals suffering from mental disorders mostly have disrupted sleep (e.g., difficulty falling asleep as in generalised anxiety disorder, or decreased sleep drive as in a manic episode). When working with my clients, I like to start my therapy session by asking about their sleep experience, because it is usually perceived as an easier and more concrete topic to talk about, than feeling/mood. Yet, at the same time, it gives me a chance to have an idea of their general functioning or perhaps an entry point to know more about them.

What are your upcoming research projects, can students be involved?

There are several research projects in which CityU students passionate about sleep and mental health are welcome to become involved as volunteers. Firstly, my team is conducting a clinical trial looking into the effectiveness of Interpersonal and social rhythm therapy on youth depression. Secondly, using prospective cohort data, my team is assessing the effect and mechanism of sleep health in predicting wellbeing outcomes among general, clinical and minority youth populations. Thirdly, as part of a larger research group, our team is conducting experiments to manipulate sleep quantity and timing to infer its causal impact on social-affective outcomes (e.g., emotion bias). Students interested are welcome to email me with their CV, and I look forward to working with CityU students.

Meeting new faculty member — Prof Wang Xijing

Prof Xijing Wang joined the SS Department in September 2021 after working as a postdoctoral fellow at HKU for three years. Prior to that, she obtained her PhD training in social psychology and social cognition from University College London. She has three broad research areas: 1) Objectification and Dehumanisation; 2) Immoral Behaviour, Aggression and Self-Interested Behaviour; 3)

Inequality, Social Power, Social Dominance and Hierarchy. To achieve her research objectives, she uses a combination of methods, including laboratory and online experiments (e.g., face-perception, economic games and behavioural paradigms), quasi-experiments/ special sample studies, surveys, and using ecological and archival data (e.g., Google Ngram).

What is objectification/dehumanisation and why do you want to study it?

Objectification refers to treating others merely as things or tools that can facilitate one's goal achievement while not acknowledging others' personhood. Objectification first caught scholars' attention when feminists reasoned that women often suffer from sexual objectification, being treated as an object of sexual desire (aka sexual objectification). Sexual objectification can result in various negative consequences, including decreased motivation, impaired cognitive performance, sinful feelings, social avoidance and reduced well-being.

Crucially, sexual objectification is a subset of objectification and, in fact, not only relevant to women; everyone can be reduced to an object. For example, workers who engage in repetitive and fragmented work can be perceived as mindless machines; patients could be considered by (some) doctors as a tool for financial gain; even children can be treated as tools to achieve parents' (not yet fulfilled) goals/dreams without regard to their personal will (e.g., a parent could force his/her child to be a lawyer, since this parent always wanted to be one).

Unfortunately, the subject of objectification can further internalise the objectifying perception of others and show self-objectification. That is, people can perceive themselves as instrument-like, thus depriving their own mental states. Not surprisingly, self-objectification can lead to further detrimental consequences, including undermining task engagement, engaging in immoral behaviours, and impaired motive to pursue one's potential.



This is meant to demonstrate turning a human into a puppet-like object. But I have realized that the objectified version of me actually looks too cute....

What are your research findings on objectification/dehumanisation?

Prior work in this field has mainly focused on sexual objectification (i.e., treating a person, often a woman, solely as an object of sexual desire) and has depicted women as passive victims. My recent work suggests that women could still use their bodies in a (seemingly) agentic manner, instrumentally employing

their appearance to maximise success rate in a competition (both in the mating market and even in the workplace).

In addition, my recent projects have shown that this social-cognitive process that turns people into objects can be more tenacious and prevalent than scholars previously thought. Even individuals belonging to everyday social categories (e.g., you and me) can suffer from objectification/dehumanisation. My recent work has shown that these triggers for objectification/dehumanisation of everyday people include intrapersonal factors, such as motivation for money or economic value, interpersonal factors, such as an exchange relationship orientation, as well as macro-level societal factors, such as cultural tightness and polluted ecological environment.

Needless to say, objectification causes severe consequences, ranging from interpersonal indifference, reduced empathy and helping, aggression and bullying, to even killing and genocide. Given the detrimental outcomes, it is essential to find interventions to alleviate objectification, an area that has received little attention from scholars previously. Currently, I am working on several projects that examine factors that could reduce objectification/dehumanisation, including gratitude, awe and nature connectedness.

In parallel, I also study behavioural outcomes that could relate to objectification, including immoral, aggressive and self-interested behaviour. For example, my recent projects have examined what makes third parties permit and tolerate immoral behaviour, how appearance perception triggers self-interested behaviour, how prosocial behaviour can be self-interested, and how a sense of deprivation amplifies men's hostility towards women.

So far, you haven't talked about anything except your research/work. How do you balance work and life?

This is a super easy question. I am a workaholic. This means I don't have a life, so there is no need for balance at all, hahaha.

Message from the Department Head

Ex nihilo nihil fit

On behalf of the Department, I would like to thank our outgoing Head, Professor Samuel Ho, for his dedication to the role and the honesty and integrity he displayed under his leadership. We are honoured to have the privilege of working alongside such a remarkable leader and human being. He served as a visionary, mentor and colleague. Under his guidance our Department has grown and flourished, earning recognition both internally and externally for our innovative research, teaching and learning activities and outreach initiatives. He has been a tireless advocate for our students, ensuring that they receive the highest quality education and support. He has also fostered a collaborative and inclusive culture that values diversity, equity and inclusion. We do, however, continue to benefit from his wisdom and guidance as one of our senior faculty Professors – **Thank you Professor Ho.**

The Department has faced many challenges in recent times, but under the watchful leadership of our former head and through the innovative approaches and collaborative efforts of all Department members we have emerged maintaining the quality and standards of a world class academic department. These innovative and collaborative efforts continue, as we once again assist our students in adapting to the traditional on-campus mode of learning. This is no small feat, as many of our students have never experienced this mode of learning in this context. Here, I extend a grateful thanks to those faculty members and administrators who have extended themselves in guiding our student body through this challenging time.

It is important to remember that when things do not go our way, every challenge — every adversity — contains within it the seeds of opportunity and growth. The challenges were not felt only on the teaching front. We also needed to overcome challenges to our research. But with an indefatigable nature, our research activities have continued to thrive, with our faculty and students making significant contributions to cutting-edge research projects and collaborations with industry and government partners.

We are an incredibly dedicated and hence successful Department. We achieve much, but there are a few achievements I would like to acknowledge among the many.

- The successful GRF proposals of Doctors Tse Chun Yu, Nancy Xiaonan and Lu Shiyu.
- Prof. Sylvia Kwok and her team being awarded the 2022 Higher Education (Undergraduate) National Teaching Achievement Second Class Award.
- Six elite athletes joining SS through the Student-Athlete Learning Support and Admission (SALSA) Scheme.
- Prof. Sylvia Kwok and Prof. Shanshan Zhen successfully recruited two outstanding PhD students through the highly prestigious Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS).
- Ms. ZHOU Yanlin, a Zhejiang University-CityU joint-PhD graduate under the supervision of Prof. YU Nancy Xiaonan and Dr. ZANG Qiong, received the Outstanding Research Thesis Award 2022 and the Chow Yei Ching School of Graduate Studies Outstanding Doctoral Research Award 2022.
- Prof. Zhen Shanshan was awarded a start-up grant of HK\$850,000 from the University to investigate the role of the prefrontal cortex in model-based and model-free reinforcement learning using high-definition transcranial direct current stimulation (HD-tDCS) and electroencephalogram (EEG).

We are now beginning a new chapter in the history of our Department. This period of transition opens doors of opportunity in terms of excellence in research, learning, collaboration and outreach. Through careful planning and implementation, we will reach new heights in terms of our personal, Departmental and University goals. So what are the goals?

- To lead the way in learning excellence. Consistent with the University, we collaboratively develop learning experiences that are underpinned by inspirational, interactive and innovative learning. We do this to not only improve student experience but also to develop future alumni that understand their social responsibilities.
- To focus on research that leads to technological, economic or social impact. We aim for research that confers the greatest benefit to humankind. There are some important rules: (1) always seek to question the dogma; (2) seek answers to questions that matter (3) collaborate with



Prof. MANNING Matthew Garnet

Head

Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences

other scientists who contribute in unique ways — here we focus on true interdisciplinarity. We lead projects that bring together scientists from what were traditionally disparate sciences; (4) be indefatigable; (5) what you put in is what you get out.

- We connect with the community to benefit the community. We have begun this journey in the concept of the CityU Centre of Excellence for Youth Mental Health. Such an endeavour brings our disciplines together with shared goals, but also engages our Department with the community providing services that result in real impact.
- We continue to develop the unique identity of each of our disciplinary areas to capture regional and international recognition.

In closing, I am immensely proud of our community's adaptability and commitment to excellence and look forward to leading you in our continued journey in providing outstanding learning and high impact research that uniquely responds to the needs in our community. Together, we have shown that we can overcome even the most challenging of circumstances and emerge stronger and more resilient than ever.